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JULY/AUGUST 1986

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Margaret Thatcher Corrected:



**For "VICTORIAN"
Read "NEO-GEORGIAN"**

By Patrick Middleton

After the Delirium

Octavio Paz & J.-F. Revel

Behind Ethiopia's Famine (II)

Paul Henze

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A cross-section of our growth, past, present and future.

May we ask you a couple of questions?

One. Which do you think is the most useful invention of the past hundred years or so?

Two. Which do you think will grow fastest in the next fifty?

You're bound to consider the internal combustion engine, the aeroplane, atomic energy and the microchip, of course. But how about telecommunications?

You have to admit there's a case to be made for them, and it's timely to make it now.

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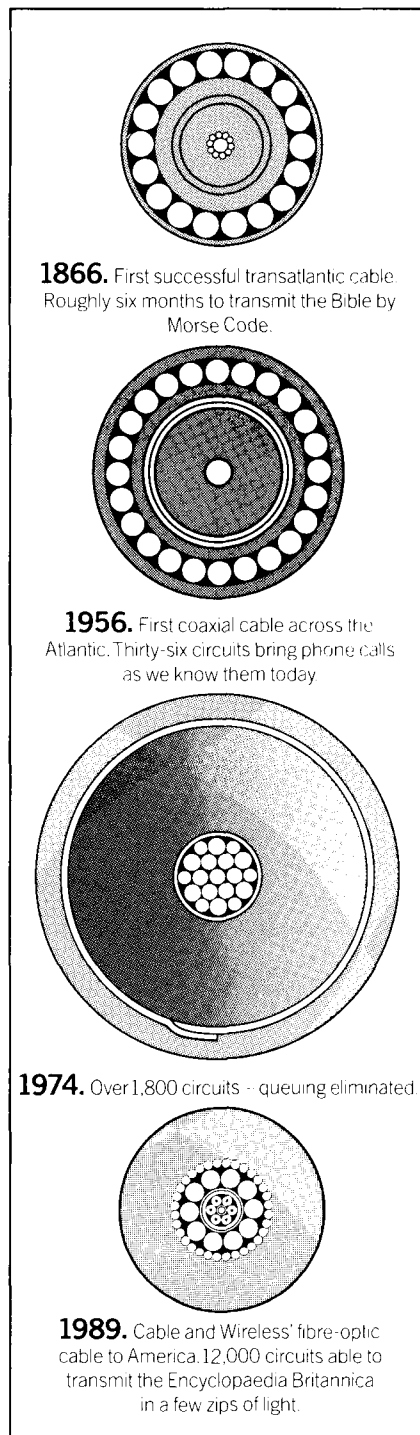
There's nothing new in people's urge to communicate of course. But as international business has grown, this urge has now assumed unprecedented proportions.

Just about every country in the world is expanding and updating its telecommunications. And new technology is constantly needed to make systems faster, cheaper and more effective over greater distances.

Currently in fact, we're improving and maintaining systems in some thirty-six countries.

In Hong Kong we operate both its internal and external telecommunications systems.

During 1985 we agreed with China to



study together the feasibility of establishing up-to-date telecommunications between the main cities of the Yangtze Delta.

Meanwhile, in America we've laid fibre-optic cable along the railroad from Dallas to Houston and we are operating circuits from New York to Washington and soon, Chicago.

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In Bahrain, we have a 40% stake in one of the most advanced telecommunications services in the Middle East and we manage the entire system.

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The long-term view.

We hope we have shown how Cable and Wireless has grown bigger as the world, in communication terms, has grown smaller.

However, if you would like to know more, write to the Press Office, Cable and Wireless plc, Mercury House, Theobalds Road, London WC1X 8RX.





If we suddenly took away fertilizers, it could be the worst thing since sliced bread.

Could a loaf of bread really cost so much more without fertilizers?

Judge for yourself.

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Patrick Middleton

For “Victorian”, Read “Georgian”

Mrs Thatcher Corrected



MARGARET THATCHER'S prescription of a return to “Victorian values” as a remedy for the nation's ills has won little active support other than from such unsurprising quarters as Keith Joseph and Norman Tebbit. Unkinder commentators have identified Cecil Parkinson as the best embodiment of moral continuity within the political class itself (Gladstone, after all, claimed that of eleven Prime Ministers he had known, seven were adulterers to his certain know-

ledge). Historians of the Victorian period have dismissed as grossly over-simple the idea that a coherent set of values effectively informed the national life during what was an era of rapid and continuing social change. Such niceties, of course, are not the Prime Minister's concern. Her pre-political years were spent, to recall her Oxford tutor's judgment, as “a perfectly good second-rate chemist”, and then as a tax lawyer. She has displayed no serious interest in the study of the past.

How, then, if not by misreading history, has she arrived at her conviction that Victorian society was morally superior to the present? The answer is implicit in her own statement of that conviction.

“I was brought up [she tells us] to work jolly hard. We were taught to live within our income, that cleanliness is next to godliness. You were taught self-respect. You were taught tremendous pride in your country. All these are Victorian values. . . .”

What she has done, in fact, is to recollect the moral order of her girlhood (she was born in 1925) and project it back on to the Victorian period. In other words, what she is really recommending is a return to “Georgian” values—those which were dominant between the end of the First World War and the middle of the 1950s—and with this temporal adjustment her prescription becomes historically more acceptable even if its relevance to the present still has to be argued. At the same time, her maladroit venture into moral history is not without

use since it points to a neglected truth: that many of the values popularly associated with the Victorians were only widely realised two decades and more after the old Queen's death.

Central to any account of Victorian social history must be the battle fought by the middle class to subdue the masses to a moral code which would guarantee an orderly and industrious society. Much of the discussion of this topic has been carried on in a *marxisant* idiom, and this, with its quasi-conspiratorial notion of “hegemony”, obscures the need for an imaginative grasp of the peculiar circumstances of the time.

THE VICTORIANS, not ourselves, were the true victims of “future shock”: in the face of social upheaval, we shrug with near-indifference where they shivered with what Sydney Smith called “the bowel-disturbing passion of fear.” The expanding industrial city could hardly have been other than a source of nightmares within a culture deeply rooted in villages and small towns. Across successive decades the urban working class, which seemed so alien in appearance, speech, and behaviour, continued to arouse a profound apprehension embodied in images of savagery and violent natural forces. Historical hindsight allows us to dismiss such fears as often exaggerated; but this was apparent to very few observers at the time, and then only at the end of the century. Moral management was an imperative concern of the Victorians, and this is entirely understandable. However, even at the time of the Diamond Jubilee the battle was far from being won.

Although the “respectable” segment of the working class was steadily expanding, violence, dishonesty, promiscuity and drunkenness were common features of everyday life right down to 1914. There were improvements, of course—as the data for illegitimacy and alcohol abuse indicate—but they only became significant in the later years of the reign. For much of the 19th century Mrs Thatcher's version of Victorian values was remote from the daily life of a very large part of the population. It was only after 1918 that the qualities she celebrated from her own experience of a lower-middle-class girlhood were widely dispersed among the working class.

To understand this it is necessary to correct what are common but distorted views both of the Victorian era and of

the years after 1918. Those unfamiliar with the period readily take at face value the moral activism of the Victorian middle class without realising the extent of—and the reason for—its failure. Put simply, there were two circumstantial obstacles to its success.

Firstly, it enjoined upon the masses the practice of virtues, from cleanliness to honesty, which were difficult to achieve in the conditions of economic precariousness in which many of them lived. Sixty years after Victoria's accession Seebohm Rowntree found about a third of the working class still had incomes which failed to guarantee "a state of bare physical efficiency", and broadly similar conclusions emerged from other surveys at about the same time, in both town and country.

Secondly, to a large extent the message simply did not get through since there was lacking an effective structure of social communication. Vast numbers of the working class never set foot in church, and those who did seem to have understood little of what they heard there; schooling was, for much of the century, uncertain in its coverage and effects; the print media favoured by literate members of the working class were often at odds with bourgeois moral values. In these circumstances it is scarcely surprising that in 1900 the majority of workers remained (to quote Gareth Stedman Jones) "neither provident, chaste nor temperate."

The resistance of the working class to efforts at conversion of manners from without can be related to their economic and cultural impoverishment. However, these factors were powerfully reinforced by the conditions of their social existence. From the middle years of the century the working population in urban areas increasingly stabilised within narrowly-bounded local communities which reproduced many of the features of the traditional village. Within a context of deprivation there emerged highly particularistic communal cultures which were largely impermeable to external influence.¹ "To each other their goodness is wonderful", remarked an East End clergyman to Charles Booth, and similar comments are familiar throughout the period. At the same time, such familial and neighbourly solicitude was often found to be allied to an alarming indifference to large areas of conventional morality. The "good" was that which made sense within the framework of communal life. Even within the local group the ruling principle of calculative reciprocity was applied with a brutal exclusiveness: those who could not give rarely got. The elderly were urged to the workhouse, or, if not, grossly neglected; children who proved an encumbrance were simply turned out. (In 1870 Dr Barnardo estimated that 30,000 such youngsters slept rough in London every night.) Beyond the

enclave of the "respectable", much else within the Christian ethic was ignored as making no sense. Working-class Victorians cohabited on a massive scale; and even the experience of incest, far from exciting horror, was found by the future Beatrice Webb to be a matter for open joking among East End factory-girls.

THE INTER-WAR YEARS, until the recent work of revisionist historians (notably John Stevenson), have been depicted almost exclusively in negative terms—hunger marches and figures for rickets—and as a period of moral decline ("a low dishonest decade"). In fact, these years and beyond (say, to Winston Churchill's retirement) were a period of remarkable moral and social stability. This can be understood in terms of a number of changes, social, economic and cultural.

In the first place, by 1918 the structured forms of authority which had emerged in the later Victorian decades—notably that of the compulsory elementary school—had become familiar and accepted. Already, 30 years earlier, Booth, while noting the academic deficiencies of the post-Forster schools, was gratified to record that in the area of social education they were frequently more successful:

"Obedience to discipline and rules of proper behaviour have been inculcated; habits of order and cleanliness have been acquired."

Marxist histories of education readily interpret this achievement as part of a sinister incorporative enterprise designed to sustain "bourgeois domination." From the point of view of hundreds of thousands of late-Victorian and Edwardian children, things look rather different. The increasing efficiency of the schools as agents of social training meant that they were able to pass into the "respectable" working class and to escape the environment of dirt and personal disorder of the homes and neighbourhoods from which they came. The effects of the new school-discipline were clearly apparent within the wider society; and a ready acceptance of authority rather than, as earlier, a surly resignation has to be recognised as perhaps the most distinctive feature of "Georgian" Britain.

Underlying this attitude, and the general moral and social conformity of the time, were two further changes which mark off the years after 1918 from the preceding period. Firstly, despite its persistently dark image, this was a time during which the majority of the working class enjoyed an improved standard of living. Between 1920 and 1939 the cost-of-living index fell by a third. Those in work were well off by historic working-class standards while many of the unemployed were often better placed than they (or their fathers) had been when in work before 1914. Welfare provision was not generous but it undeniably kept most people from the sort of dire poverty described by Booth and Rowntree. Far more members of the working class were now able to take seriously some, at least, of the values of respectability. Cleanliness and house-pride, for example, were easier to achieve given the availability of cheap toiletries and electricity, of mass-produced clothing

¹ It is refreshing to find that in his *Languages of Class* (1984) Gareth Stedman Jones, unusually for a Marxist, readily admits that the Victorian working class were, in the mass, as impervious to the appeal of socialism as they were to any other external influence. Their attachment to communal cultures made nonsense of the hopes Marx had invested in the supposed radicalising effects of urban living. His immutably bourgeois sensibility kept him well away from the districts where he could have discovered for himself that most members of his "universal class" could scarcely see beyond the end of their own street.

and furniture on hire-purchase. The significant comparison here is not with the affluent 1960s but with the years before the First World War.

THE "GEORGIAN" DECADES brought economic improvement but not in such a rapid and disruptive way as to create social instability. Indeed, the reverse was the case. As conditions got better so people more readily acquiesced in the existing order. Moreover, there was not the same inflation of expectation as occurred in the '60s and after. Crucially, money wages remained at a fairly constant level—oscillating around £3 a week between the Wars (compare the giddy twenty-fold rise between 1951 and today). It was falling prices which contributed most to improvement; and welfare claimants as well as wage-earners felt the benefit. And yet caution continued to prevail: it was only too apparent how quickly individual fortunes could be reversed, and those in employment were well advised to "work jolly hard" and to live within their income. Resort to consumer credit increased but without becoming fully respectable (Drage's, the hire-purchase furniture specialists, shrewdly guaranteed "delivery in a plain van").

A gradual effect of this economic emancipation was to loosen somewhat the constraints of communal living. The imperative of calculative reciprocity became weaker, and yet not to the point where a sense of neighbourliness was in danger of dissolution. The security afforded by belonging to a community was retained, together with an enhanced feeling of economic and social independence. There could now be an awareness of participation in a wider society. Equally important, the increase and diversification of working-class consumption was not such as to blur the lines of class distinction (and so of social hierarchy). Street photographs amply bear out George Orwell's comment that

"the great majority of people can be placed in an instant by their clothes and general appearance. . . ."

Economic change served to reconcile the working class to the social order without, as happened in the 1960s, weakening that order. In 1935, while the scarcely glamorous George V was cheered wherever he went, the essentially Victorian authority figure of Stanley Baldwin won an impressive slice of the working-class vote. "The national government", concluded a reluctant Orwell, "represented the will of the mass of the people."

The second factor which set off "Georgian" Britain from

the decades which went before was the changing nature of social communication. The age of mass media was initiated in 1918. By the early 1930s two out of three adults read a daily paper; a similar proportion was at the cinema at least once a week; and radio was part of the daily life of two-thirds of British families. The working class was exposed to a hitherto unparalleled system of direct moral influence. What is significant is that these media did not follow the exhortatory style of the Victorian tract and sermon. Rather, they supported the existing moral and social order by excluding almost everything from their output which could be viewed as morally and socially deviant.

The British Board of Film Censors was determined that "nothing will be passed which is calculated to demoralise the public." This meant the censoring not only of overtly "immoral" material, but of anything deemed likely to undermine those in authority, from the Royal Family to policemen and teachers. The Reithian BBC (which survived largely unchanged long after its creator's departure) followed a similar policy with even greater rigour. In consequence, from cinema and radio the working-class audience got a clear impression that any departure from received morality and social hierarchy was literally unspeakable. To all this, the popular press might seem an exception. In fact, despite its more relaxed tone, it plainly embodied the values of respectability. Even the favoured ritual of Sabbath salacity afforded by a slow post-roast reading of the *News of the World* (selling four million copies every Sunday by the end of the 1930s) was, as at least one judge declared, a force for moral improvement: crime was inevitably followed by punishment.

THE MARXISANT VIEW of those aspects of "Georgian" culture is easily predictable; and it can be readily enough supported by an artful orchestration of some of the crasser examples of censorship in action. However, even some commentators who would not admit to *marxisant* sympathies seem inclined to a simplistic "social control" presentation of the "Georgian" media. Thus, for one cinema historian (Jeffrey Richards) "a largely working-class audience was being programmed to accept the concepts of propriety and decorum which were paramount in suburbia."² The term "programming" seems to imply a large measure of ideological purposiveness at one level and, at another, an assumed popular resistance to what Richards elsewhere calls "the key institutions of hegemony."

All this is wrong. There were, doubtless, those in positions of cultural authority who thought in terms of a highly conscious propaganda effort; and this is scarcely surprising, given the demonstration effect of both Nazi and Soviet activity. However, at least until the outbreak of war, such a view commanded relatively little support. To understand "Georgian" cultural policy it needs to be remembered that it was administered very largely by men educated in the 19th century. They accepted without question that the middle class had a duty to protect their social subordinates from adverse moral influences and, as far as possible, to elevate their

² Jeffrey Richards: "Propaganda in the Cinema". *The Listener*, 15 September 1983; other quotations are from *The Age of the Dream Palace: Cinema and Society in Britain 1930-39* (1984).

Readers of Richards's piece on "The Hooligan Culture" (ENCOUNTER, November 1985) may well wonder at its seeming contradiction of the tone of his other writings. Now he laments such vanished values as "service, duty, concern and hard work." He finds the social and cultural changes which have taken place since the 1950s very largely "disastrous", including the emergence of "the ethic . . . pumped out by pop music and films." In his final paragraph he looks back with regret to the days of "movies and radio programmed to middle-class values." This leaves a quite different impression from the ironical commentary of *The Age of the Dream Palace*.

cultural tastes. They were still close enough to the Victorian *grande peur* to see no alternative other than widespread moral and cultural degradation. What Richards calls "programming" was the issue of benevolent instinct allied, for the first time, with effective means.

"Few would question [wrote Reith, two years after his appointment] the desirability of refraining from anything approaching vulgarity or directing attention to unsavoury subjects."

In 1922 he had been on a short-list of six; but it is inconceivable that any of his rivals, if appointed, would have pursued essentially different policies. When Asa Briggs writes of Lord Reith that he "changed twentieth-century British society", he simply swallows whole his subject's determined self-advertisement to which so much of his frustrated later years were devoted. He was, above all, *anima naturaliter Georgiana*: a man of his time (like, later and in a different world, Hugh Carleton Greene, also overrated for originality).

According to Richards, the aim of the '30s cinema (and, *a fortiori*, broadcasting) was "to direct the audience's views into approved channels." The implication here is that the values communicated by the media—"hard work, monogamy, cheerfulness, deference, patriotism"—or, as he sums up earlier in his book, with apparent irony, "all-round fundamental decency"—were forced upon a reluctant working class which, left alone, would have preferred a quite different set of values. Here, again, an effort of historical imagination is required. For much of the 19th century, large segments of that class had lived in conditions of economic deprivation and moral degradation. Only after 1918 did the advantages of "respectability" become more widely accessible; and it was this, as I have suggested, which led to a more positive acceptance of the existing social order. In other words, "Georgian" values became almost as natural to the working class as to their middle-class contemporaries.

This is not to say, of course, that they were without sin. A major function of a publicly uncontested value-system is to allow a measure of deviancy to occur without creating a sense of moral threat. Immorality, at all social levels, could be tolerated to some degree as long as it remained embottled within the confines of private experience. Where discretion proved inadequate there could follow the sad celebrity of a court appearance and humiliation in the columns of the popular press. The destructive counter-value

³ This quotation is drawn from what is undoubtedly the best discussion of "BBC English", which, oddly, is in German. See G. Leitner: *"BBC English" und der BBC, Linguistische Berichte* (Technische Universität Hannover, 1979).

⁴ This point was well put by the Film Censor, John Trevelyan, in his comment on the use of the word "Bugger" in the shooting script of Alan Sillitoe's *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning*:

"Words of this kind are normal in the speech of the type of people that the film is about, but I have always found, strange as it may seem, that they are the very people who object to this kind of thing on the screen."

It must be added, though, that this was written in 1959, and thus already at the beginning of that moral and cultural revolution which could be termed "de-Georgianisation."

of "permissiveness" was still no more than a bohemian kink.

The role of language within "Georgian" culture is especially illuminating. It was during this period (rather than during Victoria's reign) that a particular brand of upper-middle-class English finally became recognised as the superior form of the language, and as the natural vehicle of moral and cultural authority. Again, the media—and, above all, the BBC—assumed without question that this variety of English should be used, and its wider adoption encouraged. There was a conjunction of vowels and virtues quite unknown in other European cultures. Writing in *The Star* in 1932, Arthur Lloyd-James, the BBC's adviser on Spoken English, declared that:

"You cannot raise social standards without raising speech standards, and you cannot produce a uniform high standard of social life in a community without producing a uniform high standard of speech."³

It is no surprise that such attention was paid to how broadcasters spoke, and that working-class voices were limited almost entirely to comedy programmes. Errors could sometimes occur: in 1937, Charles Chilton was hired to present a programme of popular gramophone records but was soon taken off the air. In a stiff memorandum John Watt, Director of Variety, left his subordinates in no doubt that "we cannot allow this cockney voice to be heard on the BBC." Even after the War a senior executive at Broadcasting House could complain of John Arlott (the famous cricket writer) that he had "an interesting mind but a vulgar voice."

THIS, IT COULD BE ARGUED, was simply the linguistic dimension of a wider moral and cultural domination. There is, indeed, a parallel to be drawn but not quite in these terms.

First, the acceptance of this form of English was no more problematical for the broadcasting authorities than that of the values of "all-round fundamental decency." As the Organiser of Programmes wrote to the BBC's regional executives in 1925, "... we are daily establishing the idea of what correct speech should be." Second, the privilege accorded to what the New Zealander D. G. Bridson, joining the Corporation in the early 1930s, immediately recognised as "the voice of the upper middle class" does not seem to have been resented by the mass audience. Indeed, as with the directly moral component of media output, they readily appreciated the exemplary quality of BBC speech even while its effect on their own use of language was limited. This was understood by the commercial stations beaming "popular" programmes to Britain and Europe who recruited as presenters such impeccable speakers as Roy Plomley and Philip Hope-Wallace. When, in the 1940s, faced with Clement Attlee's call for more "ordinary" voices on the air, A. P. Ryan replied for the BBC that the wartime audience wished to be spoken to by "obvious gentlemen", he touched on a central fact about the "Georgian" working class: its distaste, in public forms, for both the demotic and the permissive.⁴

A further point should not be overlooked. Mrs Thatcher, so preoccupied with soccer hooliganism and street violence, hankers after a past where such disorders were unknown. Here the connection between her fantasy Victorians and their origin in her own girlhood awareness is especially clear. Britain was, for the working class, at least, a society of endemic violence right down to 1914: on the street, in the school, in the home—and not seldom at the football ground. During the “Georgian” decades this ceased to be so. In 1937 Carr-Saunders and Caradog Jones puzzled over “the decrease of violent crime” since the War while at the very end of the period, in the early 1950s, Geoffrey Gorer wrote of soccer crowds as “peaceful, courteous, gentle and orderly.” This interlude of tranquillity owed much, certainly, to the prevalence of “respectable” values, but it also reflected a more dramatic influence: that of the First World War. One in ten men under 45 was killed; of those who survived one in five was wounded. Not only were a large number of young men—a potentially violent category—removed from the population but those who came home retained a deep distaste for violence which they transmitted to their sons.

Appeasement and order on the terraces had similar roots.

A call for a return to “Georgian” values would arouse either simple bewilderment, or, among those who accept unmodified the dark image of the period, irritation and anger. And yet, when looked at closely, the years between 1918 and the mid-1950s may not seem totally unattractive to those who have lived through all or part of the succeeding decades. Of course, there was suffering and injustice—as at any time in history—but the period was one of remarkable, perhaps unparalleled, social adjustment and thus (to dare measure such a thing) of individual contentment. But, however it be judged, “the peaceable kingdom” of the last two Georges has gone beyond recall. The irony, of course, which may well be lost on the Prime Minister, is that the destruction of its distinctive values over the past 30 years was hastened by the eager collusion of her own party with the new economic forces of the 1950s. When John Reith, in a famous speech in the House of Lords, likened the introduction of commercial television to the coming of the Black Death he was, from the point of view of “Georgian” morality, voicing no more than the truth.

The Works

Troll caves line a squinty back alley
that could be the scene of a crime.
The work force has gone cannily
to ground. (Whatever their business is
it's none of mine.)
Under charred brick arches,
on the quarter hour, each shed
fills with a labyrinthine
grumbling as a train crumps overhead.

Face up, spraddled beneath a van,
there's a body in a boiler suit.
That monkey wrench might be the weapon.
But it's only oil
puddling beside him, and his foot
taps reggae, his mouth shapes the wail.
Head swollen with a Rasta tam, he's
wired to far-off sounds, deaf-mute
to the power-saw's operatic agonies

as it whinges and stutters. The trolls
are feeding the caged blade.
It digs in with a slobbery growl,
shakes free, runs shrill
as the planks are clattered out, laid
to rest in the sun. The smell
of them turns the mechanic's head
—fresh-cut bright wood,
still warm, and rich as risen bread.

Philip Gross

The Crimean Hotel

CAROLINE OAKLEY HAD TAKEN to foreign travel after the death of her husband, who preferred to spend holidays on the Cornish coast or in the western Highlands. Caroline had had no complaints at the time, but after the first two or three searing years of widowhood she began to feel that she must take herself in hand and make a determined effort to live more positively. Travel was one of the tasks she set herself. She visited Italy and Greece, on group excursions with friends, and then became more ambitious. She joined the local Literary and Philosophical Society not for intellectual reasons but because she learned that it organised annual foreign tours: the trip for this year was to Yalta, on the Black Sea, to visit Chekhov's house. Caroline had seen *The Cherry Orchard* several years ago and had once had a collection of the short stories out of the library. One of them, she remembered, was set in Yalta—something about a lady and a dog; at the time she had been baffled and faintly irritated by it, the dog seeming in the event irrelevant.

But Chekhov, in a way, was neither here nor there. The interesting thing would be to go to the Black Sea, a place that had almost fabulous overtones, like Shangri La or the Hanging Gardens of Babylon. And it was in Russia, which was of course intriguing, and then there were other associations—Florence Nightingale, the Charge of the Light Brigade. It would be well worth the subscription to the Lit. and Phil. and the enforced company of some of its members. In any case Caroline was by temperament a passive traveller, preferring to have arrangements made for her and thus be able to sit back and experience without the bother of decision and negotiation.

It was early September when the eighteen-strong group from Middleton Lit. and Phil. arrived at Simferapol airport in an Aeroflot Ilyushin. The inside of the Ilyushin had been exactly the same as the inside of any other large jet aircraft, down to the piped muzak and the nets on the backs of seats for advertising material (though these were empty). The air hostesses had been dumpier than usual. Nothing felt, yet, at all alien. The group stood around on the tarmac commenting on the balmy sunshine and were processed through Immigration and Customs and eventually into an Intourist coach, carefully counted and recounted by the Intourist girl. Caroline, tired after the flight and disinclined for

conversation, found herself a seat alone at the back and watched the landscape roll past: enormous harvested fields which presently gave way to mountainous country with vineyards and plots of sweetcorn. She felt melancholy and a little bleak and thought continuously of her husband. The first days of a holiday usually had this effect on her; Florence or Athens were overlaid by St Ives or Glenelg and she would move around within a capsule of recollection, staring out through the glass at the unreal world beyond.

The rest of the party were somewhat dismayed, upon arrival in Yalta, to find that their hotel was an immense cliff-like structure, commanding impressive views of the sea and the coast but fourteen stories high and with a thousand rooms. The entrance lobby was a vast shiny-floored concourse in which scores of people milled about talking German and the languages of Eastern Europe, and looking like the holiday crowds of any other resort. The Middleton party gathered around their luggage while the Intourist girl went to claim the room keys; the county librarian, the only member of the Lit. and Phil. to have read carefully the information on the brochures they had been given, kept pointing out that they had in fact been told about the hotel. Most people, though, distracted by photographs of palms and bougainvillea and 19th-century villas, had skipped the less evocative stuff about modern touristic facilities and formed a picture of some pleasant local *pension* with bosky courtyard. Still, as they kept saying to each other, there's a lot to be said for mod. cons. and reliable food.

Caroline Oakley, before she went to bed, stood on her balcony (a rather sickening drop below, at which she was careful not to look) and watched the light fade from the sky above the dark shapes of the mountains that rose so sharply from the sea. One of these mountains, seen from the coach, had had a bare rock surface towards its summit on which was a just visible inscription in red paint; this had been translated by the guide—it said, apparently, "Glory to the Party." The Lit. and Phil. had joked about this: "Catch me climbing Snowdon to write 'Vote for Thatcher!'" said someone. The county librarian observed tartly that that was hardly an appropriate parallel. Caroline, in her capsule, had paid little attention; now, in the soft warm night air, she was filled for the first time with the sense

of being in another country. On the next balcony, a deck-chair scraped and someone said something in a tongue she did not recognise; music seeped up from far beneath; lights twinkled along the coast. The sea was quite flat and still, a shade darker than the sky, and split by a wide shimmering belt of reflected light from a huge yellow moon.

She tried to remember exactly when the Crimean War had been and what it had been about. Who was against whom, and who won? All she could recall was Florence Nightingale and the Light Brigade. She had read a book on Florence Nightingale fairly recently. Written from a feminist position, it had left Caroline rather more affected by the unenviable situation of men at that time. The descriptions of the sufferings of the soldiers were something you could not forget—typhus, cholera, gangrene, those hideous suppurating wounds. The mud and the cold; the sick and wounded laid out in rows like corpses; the operations without anaesthetic. As you read of all that, it was no wonder that you ended up paying little attention to what it had been all about or who won. Now, that seemed irrelevant—like the dog in Chekhov's story.

She looked down, gingerly, at the forecourt of the hotel, where Intourist buses roosted under a floodlight. Sevastopol, she supposed, must be somewhere further along the coast. Perhaps they would be taken there.

THEY WERE NOT to be, as it turned out. The Intourist girl said it would not be interesting. They would visit, on various days, the Livadia Palace where the famous conference took place, a vineyard, the Botanical Gardens and, of course, Chekhov's house. They were urged to take full advantage of the hotel's facilities—the saunas and massage rooms, the theatre in which there would be concerts of Ukrainian folk music, and the private beach accessible by lift.

Caroline went to the beach with other members of the party on the first morning. The lift, plunging precipitately down through the cliff, disgorged them into a tunnel just like the approach to a tube station—a curious way in which to go bathing. Once outside, the prospect was uninviting: narrow concrete promenades with rows of changing cubicles and shower-rooms, from which steps led down to a strip of shingle beach on which many people sat or lay upon wooden boards. The Lit. and Phil. party changed into swimming-costumes and descended to the shingle, where they equipped themselves with boards and sat in the sunshine.

The sea, flat and motionless, was studded with heads and torsos. People swam around in circles or simply stood, chest deep. Beyond them the smooth grey expanse reached away to the horizon, quite empty—no white sails, no power-boats. The Intourist girl, now wearing a flowered bikini, reiterated facts and figures about the development of the coast as a place of rest

and recreation for the Soviet people. Caroline, gazing at that bare inactive sea, said "People don't go sailing?" The Intourist girl replied that Russian people were not very interested in boats.

"How odd", said Caroline.

"No. Not odd. Just they are not interested."

Caroline got up and made her way down to the water. The function of the wooden boards became apparent; the pebbles were quite excruciatingly painful to the feet, like walking on blunt knives. Lurching from side to side she achieved the water, which was tepid and full of very small inoffensive jellyfish that brushed against her thighs as she waded out. The sea slopped around her, lethargically; she sank into it, swam for a little and then trod water. All around her other heads stuck up. She turned away from the beach and stared out across the empty sea, the horizon now seeming very close, as though you could reach out and touch it. She wondered how far away Turkey was.

The afternoon was devoted to Yalta itself—a tour of the town on foot to be followed by the visit to Chekhov's villa. Shepherded by the Intourist girl, they walked slowly along the front amid decorous crowds, noting the absence of transistor radios, litter and hooliganism. People patiently queued at a funfair for dodgems and the Big Wheel; rows of teenagers sat on a wall, looking at the sea. They seemed to walk for a long time; the sea front was more extensive than anyone had realised. Caroline, falling behind the others at one point, and separated from them by the crowd—there really were a great many people—found a man alongside and was startled to realise that he was speaking to her: "American?"

"English."

There was a pause. "I like very much England", he said.

"Really?" said Caroline with interest. "You've been there, then?"

He was a big burly man, balding, tanned, neatly dressed in clean white shirt and drill trousers. A large chrome watch glittered on a hairy arm; he evoked, for some indefinable reason, the sea. And indeed it emerged that he had worked as engineer on a refrigerator container ship plying the North Sea and frequently calling in at Hull, which accounted for his knowledge of English. He was recently retired and lived near Gorky. Still walking side by side, jostled by the thickening crowd (they were approaching the central square) they talked of Hull ("Very nice people—very kind—I am visiting in many houses of friends"), of the circumstances of Caroline's visit to the Crimea, of the man's situation, which perturbed her a little—an inadequate pension, food shortages, problems about accommodation which he had to share with a sister ("We are not always liking each other very much, I am afraid"). His openness surprised her.

They had caught up, now, with the rest of the group. Caroline explained her companion's familiarity with England; the conversation became more general; the

Intourist guide said, "And now we are making our visit to Chekhov's villa." To Caroline she added, "I think this is a very boring man, we must get rid of him." "No", said Caroline. "He's rather nice." "I do not think so", said the girl. "Good, here is our bus. Get on, please."

The man, when Caroline looked out of the coach window, had vanished into the crowd. The woman beside her, wife of a prominent Middleton headmaster, said, "How interesting—someone turning up like that and talking English. Hull, of all places!" Her husband leaned across the aisle: "Mind you, their language teaching is a sight better than ours, it seems to me. But that chap had learned his on the job, one gathered. You had quite a chat, Mrs Oakley?" "Yes", said Caroline. "We did." The coach was squeezing through narrow streets; large Edwardian houses sheltered behind high walls and foliage; people clutching plastic carrier-bags were queuing beside a lorry that had tipped a heap of potatoes on to the pavement.

The Chekhov villa was reached by way of a museum displaying memorabilia and photographs. Letters in glass cases; early editions of the works; a very long black coat, a pair of gloves, a handkerchief. A photograph showed the writer wearing what appeared to be that very coat, standing with two dogs beside a large watering-can. The dogs, prick-eared, curly-tailed creatures, stared alertly at the camera; Chekhov looked sad. Caroline examined it for a couple of minutes, wondering if the dogs related at all to the dog in the story. She found their beady, interested eyes, gazing at one from eighty years ago, curiously moving. So, in some humdrum way, was the watering-can. The Intourist girl was recounting, in an unintermittent monotone, the story of the last years of Chekhov's life: the tuberculosis, the exile to Yalta's beneficial climate, his loneliness separated from Olga Knipper and his Moscow friends. The Middleton party moved respectfully through the villa, fenced off by velvet ropes from the desk, the dining-table, the favourite chair. Caroline, alone for a moment in a small room overlooking a tree-filled garden in which little winding paths disappeared into greenery, could hear nothing but the creak of a floorboard and a clock ticking. She thought of long aching afternoons in an empty house.

That evening in the hotel a vocal group appeared in the immense dining-room; conversation was blotted out by the crash of amplified music. The Lit. and Phil., grimacing, ate without speaking, while rainbow shafts of strobe lighting swept across them. Caroline went to bed early with a headache and lay awake for a long time. She felt as though she had been sleeping in this room for many weeks. Its landscape was infinitely familiar: the matching orange patterned curtains and bedspread, the cheap veneer dressing-table, the glass-topped chest, the squat fifties-style armchair. Above, below and on all sides were a thousand similar rooms, like the cells of a honeycomb, each with its embedded occupant or occupants, lying there dreaming in assor-

ted languages. Eventually she got up, put the light on and fetched a book from her suitcase. Before getting back into bed with it she stood for a while looking at the map of the Soviet Union thoughtfully supplied by the hotel in a folder along with the list of charges for laundry, hire of a refrigerator, use of the sauna, etc. She saw a great shapeless mass cementing Europe to China; there were the familiar almost cosy outlines of Scandinavia, the Germanies, Austria, Hungary, Yugoslavia, neat and small, and then this immense sprawl of space—emptier and emptier of place-names—reaching across the top of the world with India and the Malaysian archipelago dangling from it. She put her finger on the Crimea and thought: there am I.

THEY VISITED the Botanical Gardens. They tasted Crimean wines at a vineyard. They walked or plunged in the lift down to the beach and swam in that tepid sea. People kept saying Russia somehow wasn't at all as one had imagined. On the fourth day they climbed once again into the coach to be taken to the Livadia Palace, scene of the conference. The Intourist girl recited recent history to them, doggedly, through the megaphone. Harold Innis, the headmaster, became irritated, interrupting *sotto voce*: "Yes, yes, my love . . . we're not complete ignoramuses." Inside the palace the party stood before glass cases and inspected the signatures of Roosevelt, Stalin and Churchill; the conference table, at the far end of an expanse of parquet, looked deceptively homely, like something you might have breakfast at. "There is now exhibition of photographs", announced the girl. "This way please." "Well, I don't know . . ." said Rosemary Innis. "I'm not that mad about photography. I may just slip out and enjoy the gardens a bit." "Everyone comes, please", said the girl sternly. "It is very interesting. You will wish to see."

They were war photographs. Caroline, absorbed, moved from one grey scene to another: a towering mound of German helmets, a man sitting head in hands beside the shot bodies of his wife and daughter, people digging in the rubble of Berlin, an aircraft embedded in the façade of an 18th-century Belgrade house, the lunar landscape of destroyed cities. A great bleakness crept over her; when someone spoke she could not reply but moved away to the window. Outside, some small children ran round and round on the gravelled paths of the palace gardens. One of the photographs had shown people sunbathing amid the ruins of Sevastopol. Caroline thought again of an illustration in that book about Florence Nightingale; soldiers laid out on stretchers, row upon row of them, mummy-like with bandaged arms, legs, heads.

They came out into the sunshine. "We walk a little, I think", said the Intourist girl. "It is very nice to walk in these gardens."

It was indeed. Caroline, though, still chilled by the photographs and feeling tired, sat down on a bench, saying to the guide that she would wait there until the rest of the party finished their tour. "I think you will not like to be alone", said the girl. "It is better you come also." "I'll be fine" said Caroline firmly. "Please. . . ." The group moved away among the trees.

It was hot. She lay back, her head against a tree, and closed her eyes. After a few moments, though, the sense of a presence made her open them. A man was standing over her—sprung, apparently, from behind the tree for there had been no one near when she sat down. He wore only a pair of bathing shorts and glistened with sweat. It was, she realised with amazement, the man from the promenade at Yalta—the English-speaking engineer. He was smiling broadly.

"Good morning."

"Good morning", said Caroline.

"I am very pleased to be seeing you again."

She continued to stare at him, quite nonplussed. He carried a rolled bathing-towel under one arm which he shook out and applied vigorously to his shining bronzed torso.

"I am very hot. I have done much walking. I may sit down?"

"Yes—of course."

He sat beside her on the bench. "You have enjoyed your visit to the Livadia Palace?"

"Well. . . . I'm not sure that enjoy would be quite the right word. It's certainly very interesting. Those war photographs are rather. . . . disturbing."

"Ah. . . ." He appeared to ponder. "I too have seen."

There was a silence. "Where were you in the War?" Caroline asked. Wondering, at once, if this was tactless.

IT WAS NOT, apparently. He began to talk with animation about his service on a destroyer in the Barents Sea off Murmansk. Caroline sat listening in the sunshine; around her carefully tended trees and shrubs shifted in the breeze and a squirrel ran across the grass. Images flickered before her eyes—figures in oilskins battling along tipping decks, bearded faces iced with spray—derived, she realised, from old Pinewood Studios films. When he stopped speaking she said, "I'm afraid I find it almost impossible to. . . ."—not to imagine, that was wrong, imagining was what one did, so ineptly—" . . . to have any idea of", she ended lamely.

"You are child in the war, I think?"

"Well. . . . adolescent. I was at boarding school in Devon."

"Please tell me how that was. You were happy?"

"It's hard to say. I missed my parents a lot. I was only eleven when I went there. I suppose it was like many adolescences—happy some of the time, rather wretched at others." The school recreated itself and hung

invisible around them in the Crimean Park: expanses of shiny linoleum. Spam, powdered egg, the smell of metal polish, the thin high cries of girls playing hockey. The man was gazing at her with kindly, puzzled brown eyes: "Wretched?" "Miserable. Unhappy." He nodded, "I am like so too. I am very difficult as boy, my mother say. I think perhaps boy is more difficult than girl, always? Yes?" "I've never had children, so it's something I'm a bit ignorant about." "I too have not children—not wife either. I would like wife, several times, but it is not good life for woman, husband always going away on ships. So I am not marry." "Married", said Caroline. "You did not marry or you were not married." Really! she thought, how pompous! And blushed "I am sorry—I speak English very badly." "No you don't", Caroline exclaimed. "You speak it very well—extremely well. And I don't speak a word of Russian."

The man lit a cigarette. "We are coming from very different countries."

She glanced at him, wondering.

He waved the cigarette—at distant mountains, at the hammer and sickle rippling above the wedding-cake palace. Sparks of sunlight snapped from his chrome watch-strap. "You are not seeing young sailor on a destroyer. I am not seeing this school in. . . . where it is?"

"Devon. Yes—I understand what you mean. But in a way isn't it a more general difficulty. I mean. . . ."—she groped, surprised at herself—" . . . in fact even where people one knows well are concerned, my husband even, you see he used to go to an office every day—he was a solicitor—and after he died I realised I had very little idea of what it was *like* for him. Really like. He wasn't a person who talked a lot about himself. It upsets me sometimes, now—feeling that I had so little idea." She couldn't think what had come over her—talking like this to a complete stranger.

"Russian people are talking more about themselves, I think."

"Are they? Well, I should imagine that's a good thing."

"I am not talking so much because there is my sister only to listen and she has heard much already. Here now are your friends coming again."

"Yes", said Caroline. "So they are." The Lit. and Phil., herded by the Intourist girl, straggled from the woodland path.

"I am going now." He stood up. "Perhaps we meet again on the beach. I am swimming there tomorrow early. Before breakfast. Do you like to swim before breakfast?"

Caroline did not look at him. "I do quite like swimming before breakfast" she said. He walked away. She picked up her bag and rejoined the group. "Miles of trees with little labels", said Rosemary Innis. "You were wise to stay behind." "I say!" exclaimed her husband. "Wasn't that the same chap we talked to in Yalta?" "Yes", Caroline replied. "It was." "What an extraordinary coincidence! I suppose it was a coincidence?" "I don't know", said Caroline. "Do you think

it was?" The Intourist girl, restive, was trying to head them towards the coach.

Caroline sat at the front, a position that gave you the best view. Within the coach's shell of tinted glass you moved between sea and mountains, gazing dispassionately down at people, houses, cars, knowing that you would never see them again: the place passed by like a film, unreachable and impinging only on the vision. You saw it but did not feel it. Indeed, since the coach was air-conditioned you forgot even that it was hot outside.

THERE WERE only two more days to go. The Lit. and Phil. had fallen by now into smaller interior groupings; Caroline found herself frequently with the Innises. "I've enjoyed it", declared Rosemary, at dinner that evening. "But I don't think I'd want to come back. Once is enough. It's another country all right—I mean in a way that others aren't." Her husband turned to Caroline. "I've been thinking about that chap again. Very odd—him turning up like that. I mean—things may not always be quite what they seem. You don't know what he may be after. It's probably innocent enough—spot of hard currency, that sort of thing. Or it may be more complicated. I'd steer clear, if I were you, if he shows up again."

"But how could he possibly have known we'd be at the Livadia Palace at that moment?" said his wife. "Surely it was coincidence?"

Harold Innis shrugged, "I daresay."

After the meal they wandered for a while in the warm darkness of the hotel grounds, amid polyglot crowds. Moonlight glittered on the sea, as it had on the first evening; the hotel, a white cliff packed with light, rose against the black mountainside; music thumped from one of its several discos. It had been built, apparently, ten years ago but its positive occupancy of the night seemed immutable, solid and confident in a different way to the Czarist palaces along the coast. It was as though complacent nights like this, moonlit and stormless, reached away forwards and backwards in an uninterrupted succession, giving the lie to those photographs and to the Sevastopol soldiers on their stretchers.

Caroline got up at half past six. There was no one waiting for the lifts; she descended alone to the vast entrance hall, where cleaning-women operated huge polishers. She walked down the winding cliff path to the beach; a few swimmers bobbed in the water and

joggers pounded up and down the promenade. She sat on the beach and presently, when she looked up, there he was coming down the stone steps, a bathrobe over his swimming costume.

They went together into the sea and swam out. He was a strong swimmer, forging through the water with a purposeful breast-stroke, holding back from time to time to allow Caroline to keep up. Turning, she saw the beach now disconcertingly distant and felt slight panic: "I think this is as far as I'd better go—I've not done much swimming lately." He said "It is quiet, this sea, it has not strong . . . how do you call it? Forces?" "Currents", said Caroline. "But even so. . . ."

Back on the beach they dried themselves off. "I am finding at last a map of England", he said. "It is not easy but at last I am finding a person who has. So I see Devon where is this school is at one end . . . so"—he drew in the air a shape, and stabbed—"There. . . ."

The sea was almost empty, and the beach: a couple of lazily bobbing heads, someone a few hundred yards away doing press-ups on the shingle. They were alone. "I looked at a map too", said Caroline. "To find Murmansk. I hadn't realised how very far north it is. Almost in the Arctic Circle." She turned to him; he had nothing with him except for his towel and the bathrobe. She had only her towel and the dress she had now slipped on over her damp bathing-costume. If either of us could be thought to have something to give to the other or something to receive, she thought, then it is clear by now that we haven't got it. We neither of us have anything but towels, bathing-costumes and whatever is in our minds.

He said, "I think you are going back to your home tomorrow?"

"Yes."

He too now turned and faced her. "I am", he stated, "a man who is very much lone."

"Lonely", she said. "We say lonely, not lone." She got to her feet and stood looking down at him. "I am lonely too. Quite a lot of the time. So I do understand. And now I think I had better go." She held out her hand. He rose, took it, and they stood there thus until Caroline took a step backwards, turned away and began to climb the stairs to the promenade.

When she was halfway up she looked back. He was still there, sitting on his board and gazing at the sea. The sun was up now, and the heat of the day beginning to concentrate. Caroline climbed on towards the hotel which now, at nearly half past eight, was spilling scantily-clad people on to the concrete concourses which surrounded it.

Behind the Ethiopian Famine

Anatomy of a Revolution (II)



ing a "new Communist Party."

It is easy for the visitor to Addis Ababa to see what the Régime's priorities were: a huge Conference Hall, a towering Red-Star-topped monument of stone and bronze, hundreds of triumphal arches, obelisks and billboards extolling Communism and Mengistu Haile-Mariam. Every building in the capital that rises more than four stories is crowned with huge revolutionary slogans. All this revolutionary "construction" and large sums spent on TV, whisky, food, accommodation, and other inputs into the great celebrations of September 1984 were utterly unproductive expenditures for a country whose foreign exchange reserves were almost exhausted and where seven million people were on the verge of starvation.

Drought is only a minor contributory cause of the famine. Agricultural policies designed to promote collectivisation have left farmers with neither the means nor the incentive to produce in a country that has the potential to be the breadbasket of Africa. The Ethiopian régime's attempt to blame the famine on the slowness of Western donors to react is a measure of its own desperation. Such accusations are given no credence by the majority of Ethiopians, who show less and less fear of the Régime.

The population keeps itself informed by the BBC, VOA,

THE FAMINE IN ETHIOPIA triggered a political crisis of major proportions, exposing both the incompetence and the crassness of the Moscow-oriented military régime. Ethiopia's military leaders tried to suppress knowledge of growing famine during the first nine months of 1984, while they concentrated on preparations for celebrating the tenth anniversary of the Revolution and proclaim-

ing a "new Communist Party." and *Deutsche Welle* broadcasts, and the Régime is visibly uneasy. The Soviets scold Mengistu for permitting Western journalists and aid officials too free rein, but they send in very little help themselves. Soviet aid has consisted primarily of air transport for the dubious resettlement programme.

The Ethiopian régime has come under increasing pressure to change its policies and orientation. If it proves unable to do so, it is unlikely to be able to survive.

Causes of the Revolution

ONE OF THE MOST astute analysts of Ethiopian politics during the past twenty years, Christopher Clapham, wrote of the Ethiopian military in the early 1970s:

"... there is a potential split between senior officers associated with the Emperor and the large majority of junior officers ... who have no special connections with the present régime. ... A radical nationalist military régime of the kind familiar in Arab states is by no means out of the question. This would be no more likely than the present government to submit to Eritrean or Somali demands for secession. It would ... be likely to intensify nationalist demands on the peripheral areas and so either polarise and militarise the latent conflicts, or else incorporate the periphery into a more radical and inspiring definition of Ethiopian nationhood than the present government can provide."¹

What Clapham foresaw fourteen years ago seems to be essentially what has happened in Ethiopia since 1974. The process is still unfolding.

Clapham did not pass judgment on the East-West dimensions of the developments he envisioned. Why the Ethiopian Revolution quickly turned pro-Communist in a context where communism was extremely weak is a question to which it is still impossible to give a definitive answer. Hypotheses range from speculation that the revolutionary process was "skilfully manipulated by eastern agents" to the allegation that the United States, out of hostility to the idea of fundamental change in Ethiopia, alienated the officers who formed the Provisional Military Administrative Committee (PMAC), which rapidly became known as the Derg and

¹ Christopher Clapham, *Ethiopia and Somalia*, Adelphi Paper No. 93 (International Institute of Strategic Studies, London, 1972). Clapham's *Haile Selassie's Government* (Longman's, London; Praeger, New York, 1969) stands as the best analysis of the functioning of the pre-revolutionary system in Ethiopia.

gathered political power in the summer of 1974.² Thus they were forced to turn east. These hypotheses include several sub-themes.

1. Mengistu, because of "unpleasant experiences during military schooling in the United States", became intensely anti-American.
2. Mengistu came to admire Castro and consciously sought to imitate his technique of putting his revolution at the service of the Soviet Union and gaining Soviet backing.
3. The diplomatic deterioration of the United States in the first half of the 1970s (because of Viet Nam and Watergate) so reduced its standing in Ethiopia that intellectuals no longer felt they could depend on it and "turned eastward."
4. The failure of the West to encourage land reform and fundamental economic change in Ethiopia generated massive rural discontent which made "radical change" unavoidable.
5. Ethiopia's multi-ethnic character—the fact that it was an old Empire dominated by the Amhara—created intolerable strains which made revolution "inevitable" when military measures, in themselves futile, became necessary to contain ethnic conflict as in Eritrea and the Ogaden.

None of these hypotheses stands the test of serious examination.

AS I HAVE already suggested, we simply do not know (and may never learn) enough to judge whether the quick turn toward radicalism that came at the end of 1974 was the result of skilful Soviet or East European clandestine operations. What we do know is that the Russians had never abandoned their long-standing goal of gaining much greater influence in Ethiopia and had worked steadily and patiently to advance their interests ever since Ethiopia's liberation in 1941. The notion that the United States was alarmed by the Ethiopian Revolution and tried to prevent it has become a favourite thesis of Leftist and emotional-liberal writing on the subject. This thesis has also been echoed by more objectively inclined writers who have not bothered to examine the facts; it cannot be sustained except by ignoring and twisting solid evidence to the contrary.

The United States made no effort to stem any phase of the revolutionary process in 1974, accepted the dethronement of Haile Selassie and the killing of 59 officials of his

government in November 1974 (many of them had been closely associated with the USA for years) without threat of a break in relations. US economic aid programmes continued without interruption, and US military support for Ethiopia was sharply *increased* after 1974. One-third (in dollar value) of all military aid provided by the USA to Ethiopia over the 25-year period 1953-78 was delivered *after* the Revolution. These deliveries included what was then one of the most advanced American aircraft, the *F5-E*. A squadron of these was originally promised to Haile Selassie—deliveries were made in the summer of 1976. Without these effective fighter-bombers, the Ethiopian air force would not have been able to blunt the initial thrust of the Somali invasion a year later.

The causes and depth of Mengistu's alleged anti-Americanism remain hard to judge. Mengistu and his fellow Derg members from the very beginning displayed a distinct aversion to consulting or socialising with US or other Western diplomats, military advisers, or economic aid personnel. They avoided Western journalists and academics. Their behaviour might only have reflected an inferiority complex or expectation that the West would deplore their overthrow of Haile Selassie. As far as we know, they were less xenophobic toward the East; but the Derg's methods of doing business have always been extremely secretive, so very little is known about specific sources and channels of advice.

Though the possibility cannot be excluded, only a weak case can be made that Mengistu deliberately "did a Castro" when he turned sharply Left at the end of 1974 and continued with nationalisation and drastic reforms in 1975. Little evidence exists of any orientation toward Cuba on Mengistu's part. "Cuba" was never a priority interest in Ethiopia, even of radical intellectuals. Mengistu has never displayed any of the continent-wide and global ambitions that motivated Castro to try to spread his revolution throughout the hemisphere and the entire developing world. During its early phases, the Ethiopian Revolution was more Maoist than Cuban in style, but always concerned only with Ethiopia. In spite of Mengistu's desire to consolidate a close relationship with the East, the Soviet response was, until the end of 1976, confined almost entirely to rhetoric and propaganda. This may, of course, be accounted for by fear of provoking an American reaction to challenge in a country that had for so long enjoyed a special American relationship.

This is not the place for me to attempt an exhaustive evaluation of the causes of the Ethiopian Revolution or the motivations of those who carried it out and still lead it. To understand their actions and policies, however, to assess the revolutionaries' success in terms of their announced objectives and to judge probable future developments, it is necessary to pass judgment on some of the theories that have developed about the Revolution's causes. All the more so because so much of what has been written about the Ethiopian Revolution has been based on emotional predilection rather than data, on shallow experience of the country, and on limited knowledge of its history.

Psychologically, as 1974 opened, Ethiopia suddenly found itself adrift. This was an unsettling experience for a country that had been guided for more than 30 years by an energetic

² "Derg", which means "committee", was not in use in pre-revolutionary Ethiopia. It was coined from an ancient Ge'ez root, and adopted into Amharic only in 1974.

The word "committee" has long had a semantic fascination for revolutionaries, as in the Marxist and indeed Jacobin addiction to its use. But, as Melvin J. Lasky has pointed out (*Utopia and Revolution*, p. 667), it had its militant usage earlier, in the Puritan Revolution when Cromwell was known as the "chief Committee man" (and even the hair-style of the rebels was commonly called "the Committee cut").

leader who enjoyed world-wide respect and who had brought it through an unprecedented period of change. As one eminent Ethiopianist observed a few years ago, "For two-thirds of his life all the problems Haile Selassie had to face arose from the fact that he was in advance of his time. . . ."³ All the groups who competed for power in the revolutionary commotion of 1974-78 had been consciously created and encouraged by the old Emperor: the officers and soldiers of the armed forces and police; the students and teachers; technicians, civil servants, labour leaders.

Haile Selassie had spread Ethiopia's foreign relationships across a broad spectrum. For example, money and advice were accepted from more than a dozen nations; the most important of them formed part of the Western democratic world. Two were more significant than the rest: the United States and Israel. This significance was not simply material; the psychological-political dimension was at least as important. In the wake of the Yom Kippur war, the ageing Emperor was persuaded to break relations with Israel. In Washington, the Nixon Administration, falling victim to Watergate, had no time to worry about Ethiopia. A sense of being adrift in a world that was no longer calculable clearly gripped the Ethiopian leadership and alarmed the most modernised and articulate elements in the country as the strains which led to revolution became apparent in the first weeks of 1974.

There is almost no evidence, however, that intellectuals as

a group turned suddenly eastward. Even the small minority that considered itself Marxist was extremely modest about expectations of Soviet support; none had high hopes that the Russians would have much of a role to play in the Ethiopia of the future. No significant group could have been identified in Ethiopia in 1974 as a "pro-Russian faction." This remained true during subsequent years and, except for a few dozen Derg survivors and some other opportunists, it remains true today. The close overt relationship with the Soviet Union which has developed in Ethiopia since 1977 has not resulted in any grouping or faction anywhere in the country that could be characterised as basically "pro-Russian." I found no one studying Russian or even affecting any interest in Russian culture.

Let me examine two other faulty hypotheses about the causes of the Ethiopian Revolution, because their lack of validity has to be understood if we are to have much prospect of gauging future developments.

Was there an upwelling of rural discontent, polarised by the famine in the north-central region of the country?

Many things about the events of 1974 are unclear, but to this question a very straightforward answer can be given: most emphatically not. Allegations by Marxist publicists that rural discontent caused the Revolution represent an effort to invent fact to justify theory. During the Revolution, the Ethiopian peasantry—who account for 90% of the population—were entirely passive. Famine, which afflicted only a small portion of the population, caused embarrassment among intellectuals and confusion among bureaucrats, as well as extreme hardship for those parts of the country directly affected; but it did not confront the government with a public security problem. Governmental authority in the countryside

³ Edward Ullendorff (trans., ed.). *My Life and Ethiopia's Progress: The Autobiography of Emperor Haile Selassie I* (Oxford, 1976), p. xiii.

The Ethiopian Conundrum



JUST WHEN you think you have mentally catalogued the full range of Marxist Ethiopia's abuses of its hapless citizens, a report comes along to remind you of the poverty of the bourgeois imagination.

The government of Lieutenant Colonel Mengistu Haile Mariam says it is relocating citizens for their own good. But the international relief agencies

believe the government is deliberately using a massive relocation scheme to depopulate rebel-dominated northern areas and assert political control. It is, in short, attempting to dry up the "sea" in which the insurgent "fish" swim. It is doing so, it seems, with the active collaboration of its Soviet patrons, themselves no strangers to dealing brutally with peasant unrest.

CAUGHT IN THE MAW are people like the woman interviewed. Virtually every form of privation that could befall a human—decimation of the family and destruction of a way of life—had befallen her by the time she reached the succor of a refugee camp in Sudan.

No one reading of her ordeal will have difficulty understanding why the Ethiopian government is despised by so

many people forced to live under it. For Westerners, however, the situation has long posed a special dilemma. Should the West provide relief for people in distress, even though the providing of relief is a form of assistance to the government that causes and aggravates the distress? The broad response of the international relief community, including that considerable part of it financed by the U.S. government, has been to attempt to help starving and needy people, but at the same time to try to press the Ethiopian government into less anti-humanitarian ways.

THE RESETTLEMENT QUESTION is tricky. The government uses resettlement for its own political purposes. There is doubtless a humane and rational justification for some amount of resettlement—though there can be little or none for the even more massive official effort to herd peasants into villages where they can be kept under tighter control.

RELIEF AGENCIES CANNOT solve these conundrums. But they and the Western publics that support them can at least air the dilemma. The Ethiopian government deeply resents this sort of intervention, but it has no standing to protest as long as it generates human suffering on such a massive scale. One can hope that the Ethiopian people are able to distinguish those who cause its misery from those who are attempting to lighten it.

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was exercised primarily through the traditional leadership structure, not through bureaucrats or gendarmerie. There are important regional contrasts, but, taken as a whole, the Ethiopian countryside was more peaceful until (and during) 1974 than it has ever been since.⁴

The long-standing Eritrean insurgency, which had been heated up since the late 1960s by substantial input of arms, funds, and training from multiple Communist and Communist-friendly sources, was a contributing factor to the Revolution, but not in the sense that the armed forces sympathised with the Eritrean rebels. Termination of Communist Chinese support for the Eritreans in 1972—and the settlement of differences with Sudan by the Ethiopian government in 1971-72—weakened them. Israeli advisers were successful in helping the Ethiopian armed forces contain the Eritrean rebellion in 1972-73 at a cost of no more than 15% of the manpower, arms, and budgetary outlays re-

quired for much less effective containment since the Revolution.

Difficulties that developed in the Ethiopian army both in Eritrea and in the south during early 1974 reflected concrete grievances over pay and the level of logistics support. But behind them lay apprehension that the country was starting to drift, and realisation that military priorities were no longer clear. The cleavage between attitudes of younger, better-educated, junior officers and more traditional military leaders of higher rank was becoming operative.

There were no differences between any elements in the military and the civilian leadership over the need to meet any potential or actual threat from Somalia to Ethiopia's territorial integrity, but there was no insurgency in the Ogaden in 1974. There was no other ethnic strain in 1973-75 sufficiently advanced to have been a causative factor in the Revolution.

The Course of the Revolution



UNTIL THE REVOLUTION suddenly turned bloody on the night of 23 November 1974—when General Aman Andom, the provisional head of state who had replaced Haile Selassie, was killed in a shoot-out at his house and 59 imprisoned officials were summarily executed—everything had proceeded in a remarkably benign and good-natured fashion.

During the spring and summer of 1974 there had been a great deal of public commotion, marching, protesting, debating, polemicising, and political manoeuvring. Gradually the military committee called the Derg had consolidated its influence and manoeuvred or intimidated civilian politicians into passivity or cooperation. There had been tense periods but Ethiopians did not have to be concerned about personal safety or random or deliberate violence. There was more open discussion of political and social issues than the country had ever experienced in its long history. Members of the aristocracy and former ministers and officials, many of them

young and with reputations for enlightened views, voluntarily surrendered for internment on promise that charges of corruption or abuse of privilege would be systematically reviewed. A confused Haile Selassie, who had just passed his 82nd birthday, was taken from his residential palace on Ethiopia's New Year's Day (12 September 1974) and interned in the grounds of his former working palace (the Menelik or Grand Palace) which the Derg has continued to use as the seat of government to this day. He was not physically abused, though stories began to be put out of the vast wealth he had allegedly accumulated and the unbounded luxury in which he supposedly lived.⁵

Eritrea was the cause, as far as we know, of the first serious policy differences to affect the Derg, for General Aman Andom, himself an Eritrean, (not actually a Derg member, though Head of State), immediately set about attempting to reach a political settlement of this protracted insurgency. There was good reason to believe that a major portion of the leaders of the various Eritrean factions (who had never been united) could have been drawn into serious negotiations with the revolutionary government. There was some chance that these could have led to a settlement based on a revised formula for autonomy—going back perhaps to that which had been adopted in 1952.

Other more fundamental differences about the political course of the Revolution must also, however, have contributed to the crisis which erupted in November. The killing of Aman, and even more so the execution of the 59 former Régime officials, marked a profound break with the course the Revolution had taken to this point in at least four respects:

1. It marked the eclipse of the old military leadership and the emergence of a young nationalist officer group. This group was not yet united and Major Mengistu Haile-Mariam, though to some degree already *primus*

⁴ Nothing demonstrates the contrast between pre- and post-Revolution security conditions in the Ethiopian countryside better than the fact that travellers and researchers roamed freely through the Tigrean countryside in the early 1970s, surveying rock churches and discovering ancient manuscripts. These included several British and American ladies—Ivy Pearce, Ruth Plant, Marilyn Heldman—who travelled unescorted for weeks at a time.

Since 1975, Tigre, largely under control of the "Tigre Popular Liberation Front", has been unsafe for all visitors.

⁵ These were gathered together and further embroidered by a Polish journalist, Ryszard Kapuscinski, in *The Emperor: Downfall of an Autocrat* (Harcourt Brace, New York; Quartet Books, London, 1983), a peculiar work of alleged investigative journalism. It may, I suspect, actually represent an arcane commentary on Communist Poland or the USSR, disguised as reportage on Ethiopia.

inter pares, either did not want to risk or was unable to exercise open predominance.

2. It destroyed all illusions that might exist among Ethiopians that their revolution could continue as a gradual, benign, semi-constitutional process.
3. It soon exposed a sharp inclination toward radical, Communist-style authoritarianism (characterised as “socialism”) in domestic policies, and orientation toward Soviet positions on the international plane.
4. It gave the Derg the superficial unity of being collectively responsible for causing blood to be shed, and struck fear into all former Régime officials who were spared, thus to some degree paralysing potential opposition.

DURING THE NEXT FEW YEARS, as the Revolution degenerated into near chaos, the Derg became more deeply entangled in fighting in Eritrea than Haile Selassie had ever been. Somalia's still strongly Soviet-dependent leader, General Mohammed Siad Barre, found the temptation to attack Ethiopia irresistible. Whether he was actually encouraged to do so by the Kremlin remains, as I have said, one of the weightiest unanswered questions about Horn politics in the 1970s.

The period of most dynamic change in Ethiopia, and in its international position, encompassed four years, 1975 through 1978. During this period the Provisional Military Government of Ethiopia (PMGE)—as the Derg continuation of the former Imperial Ethiopian Government designated itself—took several steps which moved it quickly toward a Communist-style system. It avoided others, however, which left it in the curious position of being very pro-Communist in theory but markedly deviationist in some important areas of practice.⁶ Let me sum up these measures briefly.

Ethiopian Socialism

THE DOCTRINE OF “Ethiopian socialism” was proclaimed on 20 December 1974. It was defined as:

“equality; self-reliance; the dignity of labour; the supremacy of the common good; and the indivisibility of Ethiopian unity.”



What is noteworthy here is not the definition itself—it was purposely vague—but the absence of any lip-service commitment to Western-style representative democracy. The framework for a Western constitutional system already existed in Ethiopia, with a Constitution

originally granted in 1931 (and revised in 1955), a Parliament, and a ministerial system of government. Organised interest groups characteristic of pluralist societies had begun to form: trade unions joined in a national labour federation, professional organisations of teachers, lawyers, and businessmen were gaining strength. A seemingly natural course for developments to take would have been to build on the existing system, permitting the organisation of political parties, holding elections with a broadened franchise, making Ministers directly responsible to Parliament. Instead, the constitutional parliamentary structure was swept away. There was no resort even to the pretence of manipulating it to produce an orderly transformation into a “socialist”-style state. No such theatricals were considered necessary—or desirable—for the Derg's own precarious unity would in all likelihood not have survived such manoeuvrings.

Though the Ethiopian Revolution was made in the name of the united people (its slogan “*Ethiopia Tikdem*” means “Ethiopia First” and implies a unified country), the Derg permitted the people no voice in the process. No nationwide Congress was called, no groups were assembled even to go through the motions of defining what the Revolution's aims were and whether “socialism” was in fact desired. Thus, from its inception, “Ethiopian socialism” was the antithesis of an expression of popular will.

It is not surprising, therefore, that the measures taken to implement “Ethiopian socialism” corresponded less to popular pressure or agitation (there was practically none) than to the Derg's desire to neutralise and eliminate autonomous institutions, to weaken potential opposition, and to build up a constituency of supporters. All banks and insurance companies were nationalised on 1 January 1975. On 3 February, 72 industrial and commercial companies were nationalised and the government took majority control of 29 others. In a statement issued shortly afterwards, the Derg maintained that the nationalisations were necessary to eliminate poverty and exploitation—which, it maintained:

“can be achieved only when the government, as the representative of the people and in the interest of the mass of Ethiopian workers and peasants, directly owns and controls the natural resources and key industrial, commercial and financial sectors of the country.”

It was a classic Communist-style justification, but there is no reason to assume that the majority of the officers who approved it necessarily understood it as that (as subsequent Derg infighting demonstrated), or that they were not motivated by a genuine desire to see the country's economy benefit. At this stage in the Revolution the desire to gain control over the economy and the society, and the desire to make it more productive, did not conflict.

MOTIVATIONS FOR the sweeping rural land reform—“unequivocally radical, even in Soviet and Chinese terms”, as Marina and David Ottaway characterised it—that was decreed on 4 March 1975, were more complex. The move was classically Leninist in the sense that it imitated

⁶ This is a primary theme of one recent uneven evaluation of the Ethiopian revolution: René Lefort, *Ethiopia: An Heretical Revolution* (ZED Press, London, 1983).

the “*All Land to the Tillers!*” slogan that Lenin adopted soon after returning to Russia in 1917. The Ethiopian situation was very different, however, from that which prevailed in Russia at that time. The peasants in Ethiopia became the first beneficiaries of the Revolution without having played any role in it. The motivation was to make them supporters of the Revolution, which lacked a broad popular base. The peasants did not need to be placated or have their demands satisfied. They had, with rare exceptions, been passive onlookers during the revolutionary process.⁷

During the decade before the Revolution, land reform had become a subject of great interest to Ethiopian intellectuals, foreign-aid advisers, a few government officials, and some Marxist students. Traditionalists were apprehensive about it, and moderate preparatory measures introduced by the government encountered opposition and stalling tactics in Parliament. But conservatives were not the only group that was cautious about land reform. The enormous variety of land-tenure systems that had evolved in Ethiopia through its long history, and the extreme variations of terrain and farming conditions, made it a difficult subject to legislate on a national basis. With the support of foreign-aid donors, several regional experiments were under way at the time of the Revolution. Most were successful in some degree, but success generated heated arguments about the ultimate purpose of land reform—who was to benefit, and to what end? In some parts of Ethiopia too many people were trying to scratch a living off too little land (in Wollo and Tigre, for example). In others, vast areas remained uncultivated because of sparse population or lack of irrigation (in Bale and the Ogaden, for instance). The pre-Revolutionary government encouraged medium- and large-scale commercial farming (including large sugar estates in the Awash valley, developed with Dutch capital, and several Italian-financed developments in Eritrea) as the fastest means of creating an agro-industrial base and production both for urban markets and for export.⁸

In the northern provinces, communal land-tenure systems prevailed and large-scale landlordism was unusual. In the centre and south, large agricultural holdings were common, many of them based on grants first made at the time of the consolidation of Imperial control over these areas in the late 19th century. In these regions, when land reform was decreed, most landowners fled and tenants took over their farms. As soon as government control was re-established, the tenants’ actions were ruled invalid and most commercial farms were quickly transformed into State Farms on the Soviet *sovkhoz* model. In the eastern and south-eastern semi-desert regions nomadism prevailed. Land reform provoked

apprehensions and confusion and brought the régime no clear advantages.

The Land Reform proclamation of 4 March 1975 *nationalised* all rural land, abolished all existing forms of tenancy, and allocated each farm family a plot no larger than ten hectares. Peasants were only given *use* of the land, not title to it. They were forbidden to buy or rent additional land or to employ others to work for them. To enforce these arrangements, “peasant associations” were organised. These were envisioned as the primary instrument of governmental authority in the countryside. They were also seen by some Derg officials as a first stage toward collectivisation. Though tenancy was abolished, all peasants became in effect tenants of the socialist state.

HOW COULD THE PEASANTS be relied upon to put the system into effect? The only instrument the Derg had available was students; 50,000 of them, from high school and university, were sent to the countryside to help set up the peasant associations and implement land reform. So ill-prepared a campaign (it was called the Student *Zemecha*, i.e., “campaign”) was bound to cause problems. It was only with the arrival of the students in the wake of the Land Reform proclamation that the Ethiopian countryside was caught up in the revolutionary commotion that until then was largely confined to the capital.

The next major step in the socialisation of Ethiopia was urban “land reform”, decreed in July 1975 when all urban land and rented houses and apartments were nationalised. Families were allowed to retain only houses in which they resided. Neighbourhood associations, the *kebeles*, were established to control the newly nationalised dwellings. In subsequent years the *kebeles* (soon organised into a hierarchy of “higher” *kebeles*, grouping all those in a district) became instruments of control, and were given governmental and political functions far beyond the administration of nationalised property. During the revolutionary commotion of 1976-79, when terror against actual or presumed opponents became government policy, the *kebeles* were used to mobilise the “proletariat” for action of many kinds, including campaigns against individuals and groups who were considered opponents of the Derg.

DURING 1975 TWO ORGANISATIONS which had preserved both autonomy and strength during the revolutionary process—the Confederation of Ethiopian Labour Unions (CELU) and the Ethiopian Teachers Association (ETA)—found themselves increasingly at odds with the Derg. The basic problem was their objection to the Derg’s secretive and authoritarian methods; they wished to have open debate about changes and reforms. During the first Anniversary of the Revolution (12 September 1975), parading workers and students shouted anti-Derg slogans: “Down with the Military!”, “Free the Political Prisoners!”, “Free Students!” Political tension grew steadily

⁷ Numerous studies by Western specialists sympathetic to the Ethiopian peasantry attest to their passivity and limited political consciousness at the time of the Revolution. One of the best is John M. Cohen and Dov Weintraub, *Land and Peasants in Imperial Ethiopia. The Social Background to a Revolution* (Van Gorcum, Assen, Netherlands, 1975).

⁸ There is an enormous literature on agricultural problems in Ethiopia. Most of the most significant works are cited in the comprehensive footnotes to John M. Cohen, “Foreign Involvement in Land Tenure Reform: The Case of Ethiopia”, in J. D. Montgomery (ed.), *International Dimensions of Land Reform* (Westview Press, Boulder, Colorado, 1984), pp. 169-217.

during the next few months. CELU was dissolved in December and replaced by the All-Ethiopia Trade Union (AETU), a governmentally-controlled entity similar to "labour unions" in the Communist world. ETA gravitated more and more toward the Ethiopian Peoples' Revolutionary Party (EPRP),⁹ which was becoming increasingly active and soon found itself in open conflict with the Derg.

Though there was increasing evidence of dissension within the Derg during this period, the bureaucratic consolidation of "Ethiopian socialism" continued. At the same time it became clear that the most dedicated advocate of the concept was Major Mengistu Haile-Mariam (promoted to Lieutenant-Colonel in November 1976), who emerged seldom in public, which gave his rare appearances marked significance. On 20 April 1976, he appeared on television to announce the

launching of the "National Democratic Revolution" which would create the prerequisites for application of "scientific socialism" to all Ethiopian life and make possible the establishment of a "People's Democratic Republic."

This announcement left no room for doubt that he aimed to consolidate the Revolution along strictly Soviet-style lines. Pro-Soviet propaganda and imitation of Soviet and East European techniques had become routine by this time. Nevertheless Ethiopia still remained dependent on the United States for military aid and on the US and a wide variety of other Western and international donors for economic assistance. Mengistu was reported as having stated during the summer of 1976 that he would "greatly prefer" shifting to a Soviet military relationship, but was "frustrated" that the Russians did not seem eager to commit themselves.

Contradictions & Conflict



THE ETHIOPIAN REVOLUTION moved rapidly in a pro-Communist direction, but there were at least two important exceptions: Party organisation, and handling of the Nationalities issue. Difficulties here became apparent very early in the revolutionary process. In the first year (in 1975), General Teferi Bante, chairman of the Derg, announced that a political party would soon be formed. It was envisioned as evolving naturally out of the process of organising peasants into associations in the countryside and urban dwellers into *kebeles*. This was more easily said than done. The job of setting up a party was assigned to a secretive Politburo set up by the Derg in December 1975. It was headed by Haile Fida, a French-educated Marxist, recently returned from exile. He faced—and was ultimately overwhelmed by—two problems: fractiousness among Ethiopian intellectuals, and the hostility of a sizeable body of Derg members (including Mengistu himself). He is also said to have been "deficient in organisational talent."

These difficulties were exacerbated by Haile Fida's arrogance and over-confidence—perhaps a consequence of a direct relationship with the Soviet advisers or East European surrogates operating behind the political scene in Addis Ababa during this time. As I have indicated, we know little about this latter factor, but it is difficult to explain the extraordinary political confusion which developed in Ethiopia during the next three years without postulating a substantial degree of Soviet effort to manipulate the situation, coupled with indecision as to how to proceed.

The Soviet Union was not yet prepared to back either Mengistu or the Derg militarily. It was not clear whether Mengistu could maintain his position and emerge as unchallenged Derg leader. From the Soviet viewpoint, it was also far from clear that the Derg—its English title remained the "Provisional Military Administrative Committee" (PMAC)—was the most desirable organisation for building a permanent Soviet-style régime in Ethiopia. A more ideological, civilian-based group would have been more attractive, and more amenable to Soviet direction. Different elements in the Soviet power-structure may have favoured different groups in Ethiopia. I find it instructive to compare political developments in Ethiopia during the years 1975-78 with what happened in Afghanistan during the 1970s when the Russians also seem to have had difficulty choosing groups and leaders most likely to suit their purposes—until matters got out of hand, and the invasion of December 1979 became the only way of maintaining the Soviet position.

Mengistu's "national democratic revolution" was to be implemented by a Provisional Office of Mass Organisation Affairs (POMOA) whose relationship to the Politburo was unclear. It proceeded to set up an "All-Ethiopia Socialist Movement" (which became known by its Amharic initials MEISON). Meanwhile the EPRP had been gaining strength and several other groups emerged. In the provinces, dividing lines between representatives of the two Derg bureaus and the various political organisations were often quite different from what they seemed to be in Addis Ababa.

⁹ This group is a direct descendant of the shadowy organisation called the Ethiopian Peoples' Revolutionary Movement (EPRM), which arose among Marxist students in the late 1960s and claimed to have its seat abroad, among Ethiopian students in Europe and North America. It almost certainly enjoyed direct or indirect Soviet support. Other than occasional leaflets, little was heard of it until 1975, when it emerged as a "party." Its structure and leadership were never clear, nor were its sources of funds. It may have represented an early Soviet experiment in party formation, or a form of reinsurance against the possibility that pro-Soviet elements in the Derg would not be able to prevail and it would be desirable to have an alternative revolutionary leadership in the wings. It eventually became the object of intense Derg hostility and the main target of the Red Terror which was unleashed in 1977-78. See my discussion of this period in "Communism and Ethiopia", *Problems of Communism*, May-June 1981.

The situation became steadily more confused during the summer and fall of 1976. Rivalries intensified and led to assassinations. Meanwhile, open rebellions in outlying parts of the country had become more serious. The Eritrean situation, in particular, had deteriorated badly. We do not know all the contributing factors, but tensions came to a head on 3 February 1977, when a spectacular battle occurred

¹⁰ A group which included several prominent military and civilian leaders from the Imperial government, based in London and Khartoum, but with considerable strength in the provinces of Tigre and Gondar (formerly Begemder). During 1977-78 its military forces seized substantial territory in the north-west, but were unable to hold it.

in the Grand Palace. When it was over, eight Derg officers were dead, including Chairman Teferi Bante; and Mengistu emerged into the open as Derg chairman. The Soviet Ambassador called on him to deliver personal congratulations.

On 4 February, in a victory speech, Mengistu denounced the dead as supporters of the three anti-Derg political movements—the EPRP, the Ethiopian Democratic Union,¹⁰ and the Eritrean Liberation Front—and declared that the Revolution would now go on the offensive against them, arming the masses to defend the government. This marked the official beginning of the “Red Terror”, officially directed against “reactionaries and anarchists” but in practice primarily against persons known or suspected of belonging

A Dismal Odyssey



Damazin, Sudan
THE DISMAL ODYSSEY of the young Ethiopian mother began last spring with a false promise of free food in the Ethiopian government resettlement programme.

That promise lured Letehawaria Gebre Yessus into a trip that took her from her home in the highlands of northern Ethiopia to a swampy resettlement camp in its southwestern corner. Late in February, after an escape journey of three months, she found her way here to a refugee camp in the thorn-tree badlands of eastern Sudan.

En route, she said she was forced by Ethiopian soldiers to abandon her two children. She said she watched her husband die of disease in an overcrowded transit camp. After fleeing Ethiopia, she said, she was robbed, beaten, raped and held as a slave by Sudanese rebel soldiers.

THE WOMAN'S STORY, which she told here at the refugee camp, echoes those of many of the nearly 1,000 Ethiopian refugees here who have fled the resettlement programme that the Ethiopian government insists is the only possible long-term solution to chronic famine in the country.

Nearly 600,000 northern Ethiopians have been moved south by the programme since November 1984. When it began, Tamrat Kebede, the senior Ethiopian official responsible for designing the programme, said in an interview in Addis Ababa that the resettlement would be entirely voluntary, that families would not be split up and that each family would be given about five acres (two hectares) of land to farm privately.

Mr Tamrat said then that these conditions would guarantee the human rights and self-respect of resettled famine victims, and would ensure the popular, grass-roots support needed for such an ambitious programme to succeed.

BUT INTERVIEWS WITH escapees from resettlement camps along with the reports of researchers and relief workers who have conducted random surveys among refugees, indicate that the Ethiopian government has widely violated and ignored the conditions that the programme's chief designer said were necessary to make resettlement humane and workable.

The programme, with a goal of moving 1.5 million people by the end of the year, has become by far the most contentious issue between Marxist Ethiopia and the Western governments and private relief organisations that supply most of its famine assistance.

ETHIOPIA TEMPORARILY suspended the resettlement programme at the end of last month in response to criticism from Western aid donors. The suspension, to last an indefinite period, was ordered “for a period of consolidation and to digest what they have already done”, a senior Western aid official in Addis Ababa said.

The United States, the largest food donor in Ethiopia, has condemned the programme as a diversion of resources better spent in the northern famine area. A French-based relief agency, “Doctors Without Borders”, was expelled from Ethiopia last fall for charging that up to 100,000 people had died because of resettlement.

CRITICS OF RESETTLEMENT contend that it has a political, not a humanitarian, aim: to depopulate the north, which is dominated by rebels who have resisted military control for nearly a quarter-century.

For its part, the Ethiopian government has admitted to some abuses by “overzealous local officials.” But it maintains that the idea of moving famine victims from the northern highlands to the fertile southwestern lowlands is sound.

The Soviet-supported régime in Addis Ababa has dismissed most criticism of resettlement as motivated by Western anti-Marxist ideology disguised as humanitarian concern. The Ethiopian government strictly restricts outside access to resettlement areas.

THE STORIES TOLD HERE in this two-month-old refugee camp come not from outsiders, but from peasant farmers from the Welo and Tigre regions of northern Ethiopia. In 13 separate interviews, they told a remarkably consistent story, details of which are supported by earlier interviews in Ethiopia with relief officials.

Most of the refugees said they were “tricked” into gathering in northern villages by government promises that the “Red Cross” would be distributing free food. Many left their children behind, thinking that they would soon be coming back home.

However, they were surrounded by Ethiopian soldiers and loaded on to buses or helicopters bound for transit camps. Several refugees said they saw soldiers shoot and kill farmers who tried to run away.

AFTER SEVERAL WEEKS in transit camps, where there were shortages of food, water and medical care, as well as many deaths from illness, the settlers were packed into Soviet “Antonov” transport planes or buses for the journey of 600 to 700 miles southward to resettlement sites near Asosa and Gambela. Several refugees said that people who became

to the Ethiopian Peoples' Revolutionary Party.

Near-chaos ensued. The Somalis, who had signed a Friendship Treaty with the USSR in 1974, and had been supplied with nearly \$300 million in additional Soviet weaponry by 1977, found the temptation to attack irresistible. Somali preparations for operations against Ethiopia had been under way in earnest for more than a year. I find it impossible to believe, given the high degree of Soviet presence in the Somali armed forces and the security service (more than 4,000 advisers), that the Russians were not informed of what the Somalis were planning. If they had objected seriously, they could have halted aid and taken other steps to impair the Somalis' ability to attack. Nothing of the kind happened. President Siad Barre eagerly assumed that Mengistu had

botched his revolution badly and that Ethiopia was falling apart. His guerrillas cut the Addis Ababa-Djibouti railway in June; and by July, backed by thinly disguised Somali army regulars, launched an invasion along the entire southern and eastern borders of Ethiopia.

The Ethiopian armed forces, deeply affected by the political confusion that had engulfed the country during the previous year, came close to collapsing. South Yemeni troops were brought in to defend the crucial Dire Dawa-Harar area and the F5-Es delivered by the United States the previous year gave skilled Ethiopian pilots the capacity to destroy the Soviet-supplied Somali Air Force. Time was thus bought for the Soviet-Cuban intervention, which enabled Mengistu to regain all territory taken from the Somalis by early March 1978. Except for the Red Terror, which continued to rage against the EPRP and any others who were considered to be opponents of Mengistu, politics ceased in Ethiopia during this period, and implementation of many revolutionary "reforms" came to a halt.

critically ill during the bus ride south were hauled out of the buses and abandoned at roadsides.

In both Gambela and Asosa, lowland areas where more than 145,000 people have been resettled in scores of new villages in the past 16 months, the refugees said there were chronic shortages of food, clothes and shelter. Many said they became ill with malaria.

PARTY OFFICIALS AND SOLDIERS, the refugees said, forced the settlers to clear land and build houses, enforcing discipline by beating and imprisoning those who refused to work. In both Asosa and Gambela, refugees said they were forced to work on cooperative farms and were allowed little time to tend their small gardens.

Gebre Selassie, 24, a political refugee who said he worked in Asosa for the Ethiopian government as a medical assistant, supported the accounts of many refugees by saying that the major health problem in the camps was malnutrition.

"Most of the people in the camps were sick because of hunger", said Gebre Selassie. "They were not given enough food." He said most settlers were given about 500 grams (just over a pound) of corn a day at Asosa, an amount nutritionists say is insufficient to maintain body weight while doing heavy work.

REFUGEES HERE said they were frequently warned by party officials against trying to escape. In weekly "political education" meetings, the officials warned settlers of Ethiopian soldiers who would shoot them, of wild animals in nearby jungles, and of allegedly cannibalistic tribesmen across the nearby Sudanese border.

Yet between last November and the first of this year, the refugees estimate that about 3,000 Ethiopians tried to escape Gambela and Asosa. They said many were captured inside the border and that some drowned trying to cross rivers into Sudan.

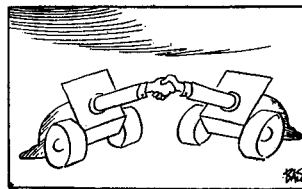
Lethawaria, the 27-year-old mother of two whose husband died in transit before reaching Gambela, was one of several hundred women captured by Sudanese rebel soldiers, believed by relief officials here to belong to the Sudanese People's Liberation Army, an Ethiopian-backed group that controls areas of southern Sudan adjacent to the resettlement camps.

According to several of these women who arrived last month, the Sudanese rebel soldiers raped them and forced them to live for a month as slaves in Sudanese villages.

Blaine Harden

in the INTERNATIONAL HERALD TRIBUNE

The Full Soviet Embrace



THE KREMLIN showed both patience and persistence in advancing its cause in Ethiopia during 1976-77. The Soviets knew they were playing a game for high stakes. Their unexpected

success in Angola in 1975-76—when the Cubans, as a Revolutionary Expeditionary Force, first came into their own as mercenaries who could change the course of history—no doubt whetted Soviet appetites in the Horn. The Soviets had a strong position in Somalia in which they had invested heavily. But politically Somalia was a dead end. Ethiopia was a much larger prize, with far greater potential. Russian expansionists had dreamed about it since the 19th century. The Soviet desire to see the Derg create (or be replaced by) a classic Soviet-style party, to lock Ethiopia into "socialism", had to take second place to the more elementary necessity of simply maintaining a Soviet position there. Characteristically, Moscow wanted to preserve its existing assets and gain more—i.e., keep Somalia and take Ethiopia too (and, perhaps, add Djibouti into the bargain).

Three months before the Somalis unleashed their full-scale offensive against Ethiopia, Moscow sent Fidel Castro on a tour of the Horn (including South Yemen) to try to get all the countries of the region to "federate" as a solution for the conflicts in the area. He did not succeed. Moscow was thus confronted with the possibility of armed conflict, but took no known steps to restrain the Somali attack. Did the Soviets foresee what was likely to happen during the next few months, and let matters run their course so as to be able to emerge with a pre-eminent position in Ethiopia?

Some Ethiopians I have talked to profess to see such a "master plan" being applied. The fact remains that the Russians did not withdraw from Somalia until they were expelled

by Siad Barre in November 1977, in face of overwhelming evidence that Moscow valued Ethiopia more highly. It was a gamble of the kind that only a crass totalitarian régime could take.

To Moscow the highest strategic priority was to get the United States out of Ethiopia. If one of the reasons for Moscow's hesitancy to move rapidly into a military relationship with Ethiopia in 1976 was fear of an "unpredictable US reaction",¹¹ that danger seemed much lessened once the 1976 election was past and a Democratic administration—Jimmy Carter was conciliatory on Angola and favoured reducing US military commitments abroad—was in the offing. So the first Soviet-Ethiopian military aid agreement was signed on 14 December 1976. Full implementation was apparently made contingent on severance of the US military link.

Rising American concern about terror and killings in Ethiopia resulted in an extremely negative annual Human Rights report, released shortly after the Carter Administration took office.¹² When the US Government officially informed the Ethiopian Government that Kagnev Station would be closed by the end of 1977, Mengistu feigned anger and ordered that the US military relationship be terminated. During April and May 1977 most US facilities and programmes in Ethiopia were closed down, personnel were expelled, and the military aid programme was terminated. Only a truncated Embassy staff and a modest economic aid programme remained. The way was clear for a Soviet build-up, which nevertheless developed slowly until (after the fall of Jijiga on the eve of Revolution Day, 1977) it became necessary to avert Ethiopian military collapse.

ONE MORE DRAMATIC internal political crisis occurred within the Derg just as the Soviet air- and sea-lift of weapons and

Cuban troops was about to begin. It was announced on 13 November 1977 that "a revolutionary step" had been taken against Mengistu's deputy (and, many said, chief rival), Lieutenant-Colonel Atnafu Abate, the previous day.¹³ He had been executed. He was accused of nothing less than:

"providing solace to counter-revolutionaries, of fear of politicisation and arming of the masses, of opposing the National Democratic revolution, of failure to believe in the ideology of the working class, and of making constant contacts with internal and external enemies of the Revolution, including CIA agents. . . ."

What Atnafu's "crimes" really were is not yet certain. The argument must have revolved around the nature of the relationship with the Soviets and Cubans. There may have been contention about commitments made to them in return for the aid they were about to supply. Did they set conditions for establishment of a political party which Mengistu found acceptable and Atnafu did not? These questions remain to be clarified.

Politics Postponed

IF COMMITMENTS TO MOSCOW for "regularisation" of the Ethiopian political situation were made or implied in 1977, Mengistu was in no hurry to carry them out once the Somalis had been defeated. Like most Ethiopians, Colonel Mengistu (and other Derg members) emerged from this period of intense *Sturm und Drang* with a positive distaste for "party politics." The old Politburo was only a dim memory. Haile Fida had fled the capital in August 1977 with a small band of like-minded Marxists, and had taken refuge in Wollega. They were soon captured and imprisoned. Hundreds—some say thousands—of genuine or suspected members of the EPRP were killed in the months that followed; others escaped abroad or fled to the northern mountains.

The Cubans and South Yemenis—who could hardly have been acting without the approval of someone in the Soviet hierarchy—could not let matters rest, however. In May 1978, Negede Gobeze, a Marxist intellectual associated with Haile Fida, was brought home from Europe. He was smuggled by the Cubans into Ethiopia on a South Yemeni passport. Mengistu had visited Havana in May in order to thank Castro for the help he had provided in defeating the Somalis. There were rumours that Castro had proposed Negede's return to "help organise a proletarian party", and that Mengistu had been unenthusiastic. He reacted strongly when he returned and found that Negede had been smuggled in, expelling the Cuban Ambassador and most of his staff in June, and sending the South Yemeni Chargé d'Affaires back to Aden. A few weeks later the Soviet Ambassador also left. Mengistu had had his way. However, things were quickly patched up. Castro came to Addis Ababa for "Revolution Day", and in November 1978 Mengistu went to Moscow to sign a formal "Treaty of Friendship & Cooperation" with the Kremlin.

If Mengistu had given a commitment to the Russians to establish a "socialist" party, the Negede Gobeze affair gave

¹¹ The US had never had a military relationship or made any military investment in Angola; nevertheless, Angola became a subject of serious political contention in the US Congress. The US-Ethiopian military relationship, on the other hand, dated from World War II and had been formalised in a 25-year treaty in 1953. The Russians were aware that there were, in addition, strong emotional ties between the two countries.

¹² The report had been prepared during the Ford Administration, which, along with the Congress (it held hearings in August 1976) had become deeply concerned about human rights violations in Ethiopia. In my view, the allegation (popular both among Ethiopians and US critics of Carter) that Carter's intemperate and ill-timed criticism of Ethiopia out of over-zealousness about human rights precipitated a break is not tenable. The Human Rights report, along with US action to withdraw from the Kagnev communications station in Eritrea (long-planned, and motivated purely by technical considerations), simply gave Mengistu the pretext he needed.

¹³ Atnafu Abate, a Gojjami Ahmara promoted to Lieutenant-Colonel in April 1975 (seven months before Mengistu) had been active in the Derg before Mengistu. A conservative nationalist, said to be religious, he and Mengistu were uneasy allies in the Derg from its earliest stages. The nature of their rivalry is poorly understood, however. As more information comes to light it is likely to provide further insight into Mengistu's and other Derg members' attitudes toward, and relations with, the Soviets.

him a good excuse for delay. Soviet interest in a party was expressed many times, but when the first step was taken (on 18 December 1979), it was not a party but a "Commission for Organising the Party of the Workers of Ethiopia" (COPWE) that was announced, and was given the former British Parliament buildings as its (colonial-style) headquarters. The impressiveness of this building, with its clock-tower (repainted deep red) and tall iron gates (now ornamented with a hammer-and-sickle motif), was not a measure of COPWE's importance. It was given very little to do and no power of its own. Sobered by the political turbulence of the period that preceded the Somali war and wary of evidence of Soviet and Cuban dallying with potential rivals, Mengistu was taking no chances.

The Russians displayed as much outward official enthusiasm for the Commission as they could muster, all the time pressing, directly and indirectly, for its transformation into a full-fledged party.¹⁴ This process took almost five full years. The result, proclaimed on 11 September 1984 as "the Ethiopian Workers' Party", is a structure which

represents little more than an organisation of the military men and civil servants who already make up the governmental apparatus of the country. It is an arm of the government to an even greater degree than the "All-Ethiopia Trade Union." Its main function is propaganda and mobilisation of "the broad masses"—the political currents all flow downward, not upward. There is no evidence that the Ethiopian Workers' Party will ever be permitted to develop any autonomy, or to act as an independent source of advice, or to review governmental activities except in very circumscribed and unimportant areas.

If the Soviets are so unwise as to attempt to exploit this "Party" as a means of developing pressure upon Mengistu or of trying to create alternative leadership, he is likely to react sharply. Does this mean that the Party is of little significance as a factor in the future political evolution of revolutionary Ethiopia? Though outwardly it has been constructed to resemble a party according to the Soviet and East European model, its future is far from certain. It could atrophy while the military dictatorship remains.

The Illusion of Self-Determination



LIKE MOST AFRICAN countries, Ethiopia is an agglomeration of many different ethnic entities. Though such groups are generally termed "tribes" in the rest of Africa (where the boundaries of states result from colonial partition and have almost no relationship to ethnic considerations), the term "nationalities", which has

come to be used in Ethiopia consistently since the Revolution, is more appropriate, for, unlike the rest of Africa, Ethiopia is a nation which has evolved on the basis of its own internal political dynamism.

During the period before the Revolution, Marxist intellectuals and students had occasionally dabbled with ideas of restructuring the country along nationality lines, after the pattern of the USSR or China. There was occasional speculation about break-up of the "outdated empire", with independence for separate peoples. I cannot say that any of this toying with the nationality issue was on a very high level of sophistication. Nor was it consistently encouraged by the Soviets or their surrogates.

The Eritrean issue—where the Soviets played an active behind-the-scenes role in supporting insurgency through East European and radical Arab proxies, and where the Cubans

were openly engaged in propagandising the Eritrean cause and training guerrillas—was not, strictly speaking, a "nationalities" issue. There is no Eritrean nationality or Eritrean language. Eritrea is a patchwork of at least eight major nationalities, several languages (including Italian and Arabic in addition to indigenous languages), and three religions with subgroupings of some. Language and religious divisions overlap. Eritrean insurgents have always been divided on ethnic and religious lines; and these cleavages remain important today. Vague idealism about "solution of the National Question" permeated Leftist debate after the Revolution, but it did not become a major issue. Eritrea did. Mengistu was a most vigorous advocate of a "hard line" in Eritrea; and a hard line meant a military solution *à la* Afghanistan.

Minor concessions to nationalities were made on language use. The Imperial régime had stressed Amharic as the national language and enforced its use for administrative purposes and education throughout the country (with English as the primary foreign language). This policy produced serious resentment only in Eritrea, where the principal northern language, Tigrinya, had been used during the Italian period and continued in use after World War II. The Derg permitted, and for a time encouraged, use of major regional languages for publishing and broadcasting. When the national literacy campaign was launched, people were permitted to qualify in several regional languages as well as Amharic. This practice continues. Amharic, which has been the national language of Ethiopia since the Middle Ages, was never discriminated against, however, and its official use was in no way restricted. Nor was there any downgrading of English.

As the Derg strove to impose Soviet patterns on most aspects of Ethiopian life, the question of the possible

¹⁴ See, for example, "KOPTE i ee deyatel'nost'" in Anatoli Gromyko (ed.), *Sovremennye Problemy i Vneshnyaya Politika Efiopii* ("Mezhdunarodnye Otnosheniya", Moscow, 1982).

reorganisation of the country along ethnic lines became pertinent. Mengistu came closest to verbal adoption of Soviet "nationalities policy" in his speech which announced the "National Democratic Revolution." His proclamation of 20 April 1976 declared:

"... under the prevailing conditions in Ethiopia, the problem of nationalities can only be solved when the nationalities are guaranteed regional autonomy. Accordingly, each nationality will have the right to decide on matters prevailing within its environs, be they administrative, political, economic, social or language, as well as elect its own leaders and administrators. The right of nationalities for local autonomy will be implemented in a democratic way."

A proclamation issued on 16 May 1976 (dealing primarily with Eritrea) expanded the general concept, declaring that a study programme would be launched for each of the regions of the country, to determine

"the history and interaction of the nationalities inhabiting

them, their geographic position, economic structure and suitability for development and administration. . . . The government will at an appropriate time present to the people the format of the regions that can exist in the future. The entire Ethiopian people will then democratically discuss the issue at various levels and decide upon it themselves."

In practical political terms, however, the nationalities issue has never advanced beyond the positions taken in 1976.

Restructuring the country on "nationality lines" would require a degree of control the Derg has never come close to establishing. It would involve a myriad of difficult practical problems—such as how to handle areas where several nationalities live intermingled. The Derg has had difficulty maintaining control over many of the fourteen long-established provinces (now officially termed "administrative regions"). The trend in the early 1980s was again toward progressive loss of control of the countryside in important northern regions such as Tigre and Gondar, along with a progressively worsening situation in Eritrea.

The Example of Kenya



KENYA'S experience with drought and famine in 1984-85 contrasts so sharply with what happened in Ethiopia that few people realise that Kenya had a problem at all.

Actually the effects of drought were far more severe in Kenya than in Ethiopia (where only parts of the country were affected). The food deficit was almost exactly the same for both countries: about 900,000 tons. Since Kenya has only half the population of Ethiopia, the threat was, in effect, twice as great. Although Kenya has only half Ethiopia's area, the two countries are geographically similar. They consist of temperate highlands surrounded by desert lowlands. Kenya has fewer natural advantages than Ethiopia. Its highlands are more densely cultivated and settled than most of Ethiopia. Kenya's problem should have been worse. Still, no one starved in Kenya. Few people were uprooted, none for long. There were no refugee camps populated by walking skeletons. Since there was nothing dramatic for TV cameras to focus on, Kenya's situation received almost no international media attention.

How, then, was the food problem solved? Did Kenya's leaders work some magic?

THE MAGIC OF KENYA was merely good sense—a commodity rare enough in most of Africa to be regarded as extraordinary.

Officials high and low in Kenya recognised the problem in good time. They were frank about consulting with foreign advisers and donors. An intelligent government planning process was set in motion, coordinated by the Office of the President. An inter-ministerial "drought response committee" was set up before the population felt the effects of food shortage. This committee began ordering food imports through normal commercial channels, and at the same time started negotiations with donors, took account of shipping

and port capacities, and assessed the distribution problem. It was decided early in the process that in so far as possible normal commercial distribution channels would be used to get food to the areas that were going to experience the most acute shortages.

There was no secrecy, no cover-up, no pretending that the problem didn't exist. There was no sense of panic. The people could feel fairly confident that the government had their interests at heart.

ETHIOPIA'S MARXIST RULERS talk of the wonders of socialist planning—but all the initial "planning" they did in connection with the developing famine was to try to pretend that it did not exist.

They discouraged foreign governments, private relief agencies and journalists from reporting on it and interfered with early famine relief operations. They never reconciled themselves to donors' efforts to see that food reached starving people in areas outside of the Derg's control. There were no such problems in Kenya, of course, because the Kenyan government has not been trying to goad its peasants into collective farms or to subdue rebels. No one is rebelling in Kenya, for Kenya's government, in spite of some shortcomings, comes closer than most in Africa to being genuinely representative of its people.

FOR KENYA drought and the threat of famine were a serious problem but never became a crisis.

By mid-1985, 850,000 tons of grain had been imported—but more than 60% of it came through normal commercial channels and was paid for by the Kenyan government. Donor grants supplied only 35%. All of this food was distributed through normal sales outlets at normal prices. Thus, problems of black-marketeering and diversion to non-priority uses were largely avoided. Since Kenya did not permit any of its people to reach the point of starvation, and since peasants did not flee from their normal living areas, the vast needs for emergency medical services and supplies of blankets, clothing, and elementary household goods that were (and still are) required in Ethiopia, never

Ethiopia faces no ethnic issue which better demonstrates the dangers of any attempt to apply "the Soviet model" than the Ogaden. If self-determination were to be applied, the Somalis of Ethiopia (who were, originally, less intermixed with other nationalities than almost any other Ethiopian people) would have a basis for association with Somalia. We can be sure that the government in Mogadishu, whoever might be at its head, would lose no time taking advantage of such a situation. Any lip-service to, or pro-forma imitation of, Soviet-style nationalities arrangements in restricted areas where experimentation might be safe, carries with it far-reaching implications for Eritrea and the Ogaden. The most innocent-seeming experimentation with nationalities has explosive potential. Small wonder there has been none.

This does not seem to have been particularly distressing to the Soviets. I find Soviet writing on the subject of

nationalities in Ethiopia remarkable for its sparseness and lack of content. The complexity of the problem is acknowledged in a study published in 1982, but the fact that the problem exists at all is alleged to be the fault of the Imperial Régime and its supporters.

"... it must be admitted that during recent decades in Ethiopia separatist attitudes have grown stronger, provoked primarily by the reactionary assimilationist policy of the previous feudal-monarchical régime. Ethiopia's entry in the course of the revolution on to the path of broad democratic transformation and its choice of socialist orientation provoked bitter resentment by internal and external reaction. Feudal counter-revolution merged with various separatist movements which are encouraged and supported by various imperialists and Maoists, the activities of which are clearly directed toward the dismemberment of revolutionary Ethiopia."

The best quotation Soviet writers have been able to find to demonstrate that Mengistu remains devoted to imitating "the Soviet approach" is so limp as to be meaningless.¹⁵

¹⁵ "Natsional'noe stroitel'stvo i evo trudnosti" in Anatoli Gromyko, ed., *Sovremennye Problemy* . . . , p. 42, and the same source citing *Pravda* (28 October 1980), pp. 43-44.

arose. And since the framework of rural life was not disrupted, when the rains came again in 1985, farmers could go back to work on their land with no needs other than seeds to sow.

A STUDY OF the Kenya situation has just appeared—J. M. Cohen and D. B. Lewis, "The Role of Government in Combating Food Shortages: Lessons from Kenya 1984-85" in M. Glantz (ed.), "Drought and Hunger in Africa" (Cambridge University Press, 1986). It sums up the lessons Kenya demonstrates.

"Analysis of the Kenya drought response experience provides more than a rare example of a government's successful effort to prevent famine. It offers insights of potential use in challenging and improving current conventional prescriptions for responding to food shortages, especially in Africa. There has been a tendency to overlook the quietly effective action taken by some governments in averting . . . catastrophes. Successes . . . by virtue of their non-crisis nature do not draw attention, so they . . . go unrecognised and their significance unappreciated."

Unlike Ethiopia's military Marxists, the pragmatic civilians who lead Kenya have not tried to capitalise on drought and famine to impose unwanted policies on their peasants. There is no collectivisation or "villagisation." There are intensified efforts to provide better seeds and more fertiliser, to encourage double-cropping, to extend irrigation so that marginal lands can be cultivated. All this is being done not in the framework of a coercive Marxian-socialist system, but with emphasis on private property and individual initiative. When Kenyans form cooperatives, they do it voluntarily and on their own terms.

IS THERE a lesson here for Ethiopia? Of course there is, but there is no hope under current circumstances that the military Marxists who have that country in their grip will apply it. Their priority is political power, not productivity.

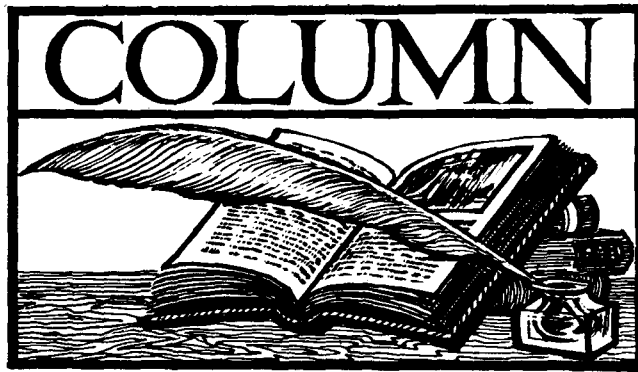
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THERE IS NO evidence that the Soviets have been urging Mengistu to try to imitate their territorial pattern.

He is hard pressed to maintain a hold on the country's northern regions, historically the heartland of the Ethiopian state. Tying with "new territorial arrangements" could only worsen an already precarious situation. Though the military situation in the Ogaden is (for the most part) stabilised, and the restraint its tenuous Western relationships impose upon Somalia make it unlikely that it can again go on the offensive against Ethiopia, and though a sizeable portion of Ogaden refugees have gradually returned to Ethiopia, no changes have taken place in the manner in which the Somali population of this region is administered by the government in Addis Ababa. Agricultural development schemes again envision "resettling" sizeable numbers of peasants from central Ethiopia in the Ogaden. Where nationality issues are concerned, the revolutionary government's approach to the problem does not differ in any of its essentials from that followed by its predecessor. The fact that "Resettlement Plans" are now strongly biased toward formation of State Farms and Collectives is the only way in which they are imitative of Soviet practice. This represents a commitment to Soviet-style agriculture, with priority on state control over production but it has nothing to do with "nationalities issues" as such.

Facile Soviet claims to the contrary, the record to date would seem to indicate that the Derg's efforts to impose a Soviet-style political, economic, and social system on Ethiopia have resulted in exacerbation of nationalities strains and regional tensions.

How COMMUNIST is Mengistu's Ethiopia? Is it irretrievably lost to the West? Is communism, to the extent that it has been imposed and/or taken root in the country, reversible? I turn to these questions, in my final article, in the next issue.



“**T**ITLES”, said Bernard Shaw, “distinguish the mediocre, embarrass the superior, and are disgraced by the inferior.” He was thinking of people, not books; but in either case titles may involve masquerade. Some friend from school, remembered as meek or weedy, emerges in the bold trappings of a medieval baron; a pale plump bureaucrat, who couldn’t ride a horse to save his pension, ends up booted and spurred as a knight. Likewise, a few decades ago, books of literary criticism often seemed to pose as novels, with titles like *The Shaping Spirit*, *The Forlorn Demon*, *The Bright Medusa*, or *The Well Wrought Urn*. The habit’s faded somewhat, although recent volumes have included *The Name of Action*, *Taking Chances*, and *Sensational Designs*—suggesting, perhaps, a less soupy taste in fiction. Certainly, a simpleton seeing Norman Podhoretz’s *The Bloody Crossroads*¹ in his local bookstore might well mistake it for a thriller on the lines of Simenon’s *La nuit du carrefour*. But of course it isn’t. The title comes from Lionel Trilling, who wrote of “the bloody crossroads where literature and politics meet.”

Not, I think, one of Trilling’s happier phrases. Colloquially, it suggests an exasperated motorist cursing his map-reader: “You should have told me to turn left at the bloody crossroads. . . .” Read more literally, it implies unimaginable gore, quite likely invisible too, since it would have drained or dried. So we’re left with the figurative interpretation, which Podhoretz has spelled out before and repeats here:

“Blood has often actually been shed in the clash between literature and politics. Writers have been killed by politicians for expressing certain ideas or writing in certain ways; but (what is less often acknowledged) these same politicians have also been inspired by other writers to shed the blood of their fellow writers, and millions of non-writers as well.”

The writers discussed in *The Bloody Crossroads* all stand at that hazardous junction. They include Camus, Orwell, Arthur Koestler, F. R. Leavis, Henry Adams, Kissinger, Milan Kundera, and Solzhenitsyn—some of whom are or have been in much greater danger than others. It’s perhaps no

surprise that the essays dealing with Kissinger, Kundera, and Solzhenitsyn are by far the best in the book.

It begins, as Podhoretz so often does, by laying the cards on the table. He sees himself, I suspect, in a vestige of the mantle of George Orwell—the plain man made articulate, using himself as guinea-pig, confessing youthful political sins. “I was only about twenty years old, a senior in college, the first time I read *The God That Failed*. . . .” Then, the book left him feeling “dazzled and exhilarated.” Today, although its power and influence are still tangible, and although it “was certainly enough, and more than enough, to prevent the recurrence of illusions about the nature of Soviet Communism”, he concludes that in several respects “*The God that Failed* failed.”²

“It turned out to be inadequate as a protection against comparable illusions, especially as applied to what would later be called the Third World. Had socialism failed or been betrayed in the Soviet Union? No matter: it would succeed in China; or if not there, in Cuba; or if not there, in Chile; or if not there, in Viet Nam; or if not there, in Nicaragua. No failure, whatever its cost in human misery, need discredit the dream. . . .”

Moreover—

“Reliance on America to defend the world against the spreading tide of a system morally comparable to Nazism (against which the United States had also gone to war) still brought with it at most a grudging acknowledgment that the United States was the lesser of two evils. . . . This, at a time when America—capitalist America—was offering peace, freedom, and prosperity to formerly fascist countries like Germany, Italy, and Japan as well as to the war-torn and wounded democracies of Western Europe, which it had just expended blood and treasure to save from the totalitarianism of the Right, and which it was now prepared to spend blood and treasure to defend from the totalitarianism of the Left.”

That needed saying—though Orwell would have said it more tersely. (“Blood and treasure”? It sounds like Robert Louis Stevenson: the novelist’s urge again.) It’s a relief to hear someone honest enough to admit that the privileges writers enjoy in the West are partly the fruit of business enterprise, maintained by civilised conventions, and defended by the armed services. As Podhoretz points out in a later piece on “The Adversary Culture”, “dozens and dozens” of the Beat Generation and their successors—novelists, poets, playwrights, film-makers, social critics, journalists, and rock and pop musicians—were “rewarded with riches, fame, and adulation for heaping contempt and ridicule on the society around them.”

WAS IT DANEGELD? Or, as Podhoretz implies, confusion and folly? Myself, I have another explanation. The rebels, *mutatis mutandis*, are licensed jesters. They wouldn’t thank me for saying so, and their message is certainly serious, as in “the patient’s condition is serious.” But what does it lead to in practice? Ordinary citizens with homes and families read the

¹ *The Bloody Crossroads: Where Literature and Politics Meet*. By NORMAN PODHORETZ. Simon & Schuster, \$16.95.

² See Norman Podhoretz, “Why ‘The God that Failed’ Failed”, *ENCOUNTER*, March 1983.

books or watch the films and plays, then go about their business. Part-time Bohemians, they've had their subversive holiday, like putting on jeans at the weekend. Oh, yes, their hair is longer, or wilder, or Afro, or Mohican even: but it's just a permitted revolt. We all need it, as desert-dwellers need the stories they come to hear in Marrakesh in the Place Djema'a el-Fna.

Only if it leads to illusion, error, or tyranny is such fantasy really dangerous. Does it destroy social ties, lessen respect for law and liberty, weaken a society's will to defend itself? Podhoretz seems to fear that it does—which is one way, I suppose, of taking literature seriously. I think I'm less alarmed than he is, partly because I don't quite buy the Manichean dichotomy between his own "neo-conservative" views and the complex of doctrines which he tends to label either "Socialist" or "Communist"—indiscriminately, as Communists do. In Britain, at least, "Social Democracy" has some meaning, and many "Socialists" are perfectly trustworthy members of the Labour Party who happen to believe in a mixed economy and a well-developed welfare system. They'd like more economic equality, but they're shrewd enough to know that it needs prosperity, education, medical care, and above all patience—not totalitarian State control.

For the same reason, I can't quite agree that "If Orwell were alive today"—the title of another essay—he'd be a neo-conservative. If that word meant only "anti-Communist", there'd be no problem: but Podhoretz calls neo-conservatives "disillusioned former socialists", and claims that "the election of Ronald Reagan in 1980 could be, and was, seen as a mark of their spreading influence." While Orwell may possibly have been "a forerunner of neo-conservatism in having been one of the first in a long line of originally left-wing intellectuals who have come to discover more saving political and moral wisdom in the instincts of 'ordinary' people than in the ideas and attitudes of the intelligentsia", I'm not at all sure that this makes him a Reaganite. I can very well see him as a supporter of Gary Hart.

BUT THESE ARE pointless speculations. Where Podhoretz scores is in his candour. Facing Henry Kissinger's monumental memoirs, he hints at having quailed a little; but while he disagrees with them, he ungrudgingly hails them as "great." He dares to say, as few do, that with the exception of *Ivan Denisovich*, Solzhenitsyn's fiction is far less compelling than *The Gulag Archipelago* and *The Oak and the Calf*. After reading a long book, one's sometimes tempted to overpraise it in secret tribute to one's own stamina. This is not Podhoretz's way. As an editor, he knows the weariness (and bewilderment) induced by an avalanche of new books. As he writes in "An Open Letter to Milan Kundera":

"By 1980 your name should have been more familiar to me, but in fact I had only a vague impression of you as an East European dissident—so vague, I am now ashamed to confess, I could not have said for certain which country you came from: Hungary? Yugoslavia? Czechoslovakia? Perhaps even Poland?"

Books from Oxford

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William W. Wilde, Joy Hooton, and Barry Andrews

This new Companion provides a comprehensive account of Australian writing from the first settlement in 1788 to the early 1980s. There are more than 3,000 entries, ranging from lengthy studies of special topics such as war literature, or thorough accounts of important writers, to brief factual entries explaining words or references which may be unfamiliar to non-Australian readers.

0 19 554233 9, £30.00, June 1986

The Lion from Rio

Penelope Shuttle

Charting the landscapes of inner experience, and especially the relation between the powerful rhythms of women's bodily experience and their imaginative, creative lives: these are Penelope Shuttle's main concerns. And as a novelist and playwright as well as a poet, she brings a prose-like directness to her poems.

'Shuttle is poised somewhere between grief and acceptance. Her poem feels its way with haunting sureness.' Michael O'Neill in *Poetry Review* (reviewing last collection)

0 19 281974 7, Oxford Paperbacks, £3.95, June 1986

Out Late

Peter Scupham

Peter Scupham's new collection has at its centre a sequence on Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. The essential elements of that play provide many of the themes of the book, which closes on a lighter note with a set of parodies and pastiches.

'His work lives on the page and remains in the mind with a rare linguistic vitality.' Dick Davis in *The Listener*

0 19 281973 9, Oxford Paperbacks, £4.95, June 1986

Oxford University Press

In a footnote he corrects "East European" to "Central European": but how many would admit to such bafflement—or to such boredom with dissident literature from behind the Iron Curtain? To be sure, his admissions are part of a complex strategy: to disarm readers who may feel the same, to dramatise his discovery of Kundera's talent—and then to castigate those in the West who would "kidnap" his work by emptying it of anti-Communist implications. Kundera, Podhoretz argues, risks allying himself with his "captors" by stressing that his novels are novels, not anti-Stalinist tracts.

Well, one advantage of candour is to make disagreement possible; and here once again I disagree. Kundera's novels can't escape their context and their implications: but they remain novels, and it's wrong to blame Kundera for insisting on the fact. In warning him against his "captors", Podhoretz sounds like an over-anxious father, so obsessed by sex that he thinks his daughter's threatened by every masculine glance. There *are* other things in life beside anti-Communism. The whole point of a crossroads is to offer alternative ways.

JOHN WAIN's is a political position not far removed from Orwell's or—in some respects—from that of Norman Podhoretz: but he's far less of a single-issue man. What's more, his approach is subtler, ambling shyly towards his subjects rather than squaring up to them, and tempering personal references with a certain restraint. I couple his book with *The Bloody Crossroads* not only because it too has an allusive title, *Dear Shadows*,³ nor because both authors have links with ENCOUNTER. What makes them comparable, for me, is precisely their apparent lack of guile.

I say "apparent" as a precaution, for fear of being subtly conned; but candour, once again, seems the heart of the matter. Some authors present a very tricky carapace, often disguised as a sensitive skin: Christopher Isherwood was a case in point, and knew it. But Norman Podhoretz is indeed what he seems to be, and so is John Wain. Perhaps it's time and experience that dispel the temptation to perform, the itch to entertain at all costs, the anxious polishing of every sentence, the *bella figura* pride. This means rough edges and occasional clichés; but at least it ain't cute.

Dear Shadows remembers ten people now dead who meant a lot to John Wain: his father, unrevealed until the last sentence, the only cuteness in the book; Nevill Coghill; a theatrical landlady; a Swiss ditto; Marshall McLuhan; the jazz trumpeter Bill Coleman; Robert Lowell; Harvey Breit; a

German farmer in Wales; and Richard Burton as a young man. Two of the essays—on his father and on McLuhan—first appeared in these pages. All were written, Wain tells us, for personal pleasure. They have that unbuttoned air.

"My vision of happiness has always been a life in which there is the excitement of ideas, the divine rage of art and the self-forgetfulness of the artist, set amid quiet fields and gardens and trees, with a river winding somewhere nearby. I have the temperament of an artist, the absolute need to live my life in a continuum of art and ideas as well as of experiences; but, in my century, these things have nearly always had to be sought in the big cities of the world, where noise and haste and crowded pavements give a hysterical edge to life and therefore increasingly to art."

It would be easy, but wrong, to caricature that as a chocolate-box ambition. Life, and night-life, in London, New York, and Paris also figure in the book. But the untidy, unselfconscious confessional, which so risks self-parody is characteristic of Wain's approach. He takes more care of his subjects than of himself. His father, here called "Arnold", would have lived without identification—a strict, energetic, enterprising lay preacher with the Church Army in Stoke-on-Trent. Werner, the German farmer, shrewd, hard-working, lonely, and rather pompous on his stubborn hillside, counterpoints domestic troubles in Wain's own life; but these are played down, deprecated, kept quiet and English. The famous sitters come to life too, but not as names to be dropped: they mattered as people, as friends, as setters of standards. Bill Coleman and his friends could make music anywhere, at any time, without even a microphone—whereas a five-person rock group needed £15,000 worth of equipment, whose listed items here cover a page-and-a-half.

The title of Wain's book comes from Yeats's poem "In Memory of Eva Gore-Booth and Con Markiewicz"—itself a title and a half. It commemorated two sisters who through death could test the dogma they had lived by:

Dear shadows, now you know it all.

So much John Wain quotes in his Foreword. But the poem continues:

*All the folly of a fight
With a common wrong or right.
The innocent and the beautiful
Have no enemy but time. . . .*

Time and its warnings can be felt throughout Wain's memorials. They give a dimension to his writing which justifies its borrowing a title which might suggest fiction. It makes quite a contrast with the headlong traffic at the crossroads.

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³ *Dear Shadows: Portraits from Memory*. By JOHN WAIN. John Murray, £10.95.

John Latham

Whetstone

At the blind end of the larder, behind the broken shelves,
I find our whetstone, bulrush-smoothed by dust.

Lighter than it seemed when you last flourished it,
carving-knife flamboyant,
dicing vapour-riddled air,
slicing through our voices in the "Twelfth Street Rag"
and through the firm cap of your finger, delicately crooked,
gentle splash into the broth;
you laughing at my scream, writing "I love you"
scarlet on my flour-coated wrist: fainting.
That evening, by candle-light—your bandage
humbly blessing—we ate it lightly fried, with rosemary
and thyme, our initials scratched into the pastry,
nicely browned. "Good but somewhat rubbery", you said.

Through fifty years of nights
your knees were whetstones to the soft flesh
behind mine. So now, in the late evening,
I warm your scarf beside the fire,
tie it in two knots, bone-tight,
and in bed curl on my side,
press them into place—it is usually dawn
before the heat has slipped away.
But the patch of hair between my shoulders,
nourished in the darkness
by your humid breath,
is almost withered: beginning to turn grey.

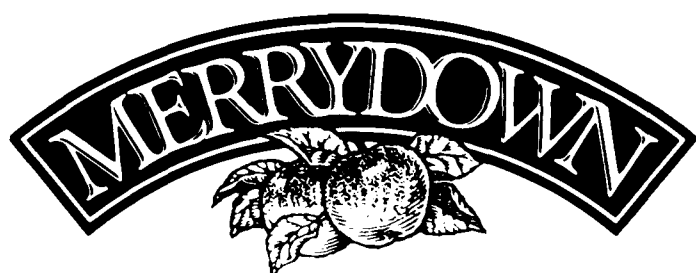
And in the same lost corner, your crumpled working shirt,
patched where the coil of wire sprang back.
If I soak it in hot water could I taste your youth again?
I see you stride in, urgent, from threshing corn all day
—you looked so beautiful—
take the whetstone from me, lay it by the fire,
lead me, tiptoed, past our sleeping child
—and fall asleep upon me,
dark curls tickling my chin, sweat-beads
rolling from your shoulder-blades
into my mouth. Each time I swallowed one
you smiled and shivered in your sleep.

You've been a whetstone to my memory so long
it has grown hollow in the centre, like our sandstone step.

THE WORLD'S MOST EXCLUSIVE TAILORS

are generally reckoned to be Crocker and Devenish of New Burlington Street. Such is the perfectionism of these skilled craftsmen, that both of them are involved in the cutting of each pair of trousers: Albert Crocker specialises in left legs, while his partner, Humphrey Devenish specialises in right legs. Since there is currently a twenty-five year waiting list for a suit, only those young gentlemen whose fathers were farsighted enough to put their names down at birth can hope to be considered as possible customers. Unless of course they are foreigners, in which case they will never be considered. There are two notable eccentricities about the establishment: in each of the fitting rooms there is a Harley-Davidson Electraglide motorcycle, so that the young blades can check the fit of their trousers while in the saddle, and all customers are offered a glass of Merrydown

Vintage Cider while waiting to be measured. This cider is produced in limited quantities each year by a unique blending process, and each bottle bears the date of the vintage on its label. The apples used in the fermentation are all fine English apples like Bramleys and Cox's, rather than the bitter little cider apples used in other brands designed for those with more "off-the-peg" tastes. It is available in two subtly differing varieties; Merrydown Vintage and Merrydown Vintage Dry. Should you be inclined to sample either, you should find that a reputable off-licence will come up with the goods even more promptly than your tailor.



Merrydown. Cider for the few.

NOTES & TOPICS

Hélas! The Spirit of '68

By Alain Besançon



Paris

THIS IS ONE of those books which have to be read not only for what they contain but as a symptom of the changing course of ideas—*La Pensée* 68,¹ in which two young philosophers, Luc Ferry and Alain Renaut, take stock of a long chapter of French intellectual life and find that the shelves are empty.

I make no condemnation *en bloc* of the great shake-up of May 1968. It put an end to the *mauvaise humeur* which had gripped the French people since the defeat of 1940, and which made so sad a contrast with the *joie de vivre* of Paris before the catastrophe. It put some vigour and even a little kindness into our hierarchic relations. Since those days, not even the most stiff-necked official can sit behind his counter and not feel obliged to display a minimal politeness. In that respect, May '68 was something of a democratising step forward for France, because democracy requires equality, and therefore a measure of *gentillesse*. It also marked the beginning of a rebellion against communism. On the left, many young people suddenly discovered that they could no longer live under the intimidation of a movement which they had seen as romantic—and then found to be totalitarian.

But not all the intellectual consequences of the French '68 have been fortunate ones. Since 1945, French intellectual life had found itself under the aegis of the magi. First there had been the stunning conquest of Paris (and soon the world) by Jean-Paul Sartre, who imposed a new *mondanité* of the mind, but had also to make some little room for Maurice Merleau-Ponty, and then a bit for Claude Lévi-Strauss. In 1968 that generation ceded the limelight to a new *équipe* which moved in as if it had made an irresistible takeover bid for control of intellectual France. The names of the new team were in every mouth, their books on every shelf. Arcane as they might be, unreadable as they were, students usually bought them not to be read but as powerful ju-ju for the bookshelf, fetishist evidence of belonging to the true tribalism of ideas.

Ferry and Renaut deal with four of these writers; Michel

Foucault, Jacques Derrida, Pierre Bourdieu and Jacques Lacan. Their analyses are precise, technical, and extremely clear. Obviously, their aim has been to iron out each message, stripping it of its aura and stylistic glamour so as to exhibit what it really contained. And what was that? In their view, nothing, or next to nothing. Foucault produced a version of Nietzsche adapted to the Parisian public; Derrida did the same for Heidegger; Bourdieu for Marx (or Lenin); and Lacan for Freud. By comparison with their models (not always acknowledged as such), these versions are *radicalisées*; and here lies their principal originality. But what goes up comes down: Foucault saw the face of Man in general fading away, but his own has apparently been fading faster. What Ferry and Renaut are conducting is a hearing in bankruptcy: according to them, that exciting, complex discourse was a mere vapour.

This surely raises two questions. Why was it all so successful? and why so suddenly outmoded? The movement of 1968 was partly a fervent aspiration towards a kind of salvation—politically, through revolution; spiritually, through the mastery of some kind of total knowledge. It was a time when people sincerely believed that they could know themselves "positively", indeed completely, thanks to the human sciences. The thinking of 1968 contains the promise of this redeeming knowledge—but the promise alone. The zealous listeners to these masters could say, as in Valéry's *Cimetière marin*:

*J'attends l'écho de ma grandeur interne,
Amère, sombre et sonore citerne
Sonnant dans l'âme un creux toujours futur.*

*(I await the echo of my inner greatness,
Bitter, dark and sonorous well
Sounding in the soul the emptiness to come.)*

This hope was bolstered by effects of language, for these writers were using an affected style, abstruse or jargonising according to their talents, but always obscure. Rather than make themselves understood, they first required the reader to understand them. Stylistic chiaroscuro was confused with depth. France found itself endowed with a crypto-metaphysics which mirrored and rivalled the "Frankfurt School" (Horkheimer, Adorno, Habermas, et al.) in Germany.

In 1957, Jean-François Revel published his *Pourquoi des philosophes?*, a pioneering exercise in demystification. But Revel alone was unable to halt a rising ideological tide, whereas Ferry and Renaut give the confident impression of sailing out on the ebb. In France's new philosophical generation we find a return to the Enlightenment and to Kant; and a real distrust of all-embracing systems. In that sense the critical turning-point of this generation again has its parallel in Germany. In the famous pre-War debate which matched Martin Heidegger against Ernst Cassirer, Ferry and Renaut take Cassirer's side. For us this means a revival of plain clarity of style. No more high-flown jargon—the search for truth must be carried out in the broad, brave daylight of a style of argument which is devoid of artifice.

But perhaps the ebb-tide of the thinking of '68 has still further to recede. For some years, in fact, it seems as if France has been longing to recover its true tradition, which is

¹ *La Pensée* 68: *essai sur l'auto-humanisme*. By LUC FERRY and ALAIN RENAUT. Gallimard.

essentially literary. The “human sciences” deceive. Philosophy in the *style germanique* fatigues; and in any case the Germans do it better. The public is awaiting the end of that interminable freeze, looking for a sign of true cultural spring: the appearance of a great writer. Poets and novelists, cowed for so long, take up your pens! Your time has come at last. . . .

SO WHAT IS LEFT of the thinking of '68? Some university battles were won, and there is little reason to suppose that the ground will be relinquished simply because the doctrines or strategies which allowed victory have lost their strength.

Across the Atlantic our “Class of '68” has won belated campus successes which are no longer available in Paris. But, above all, the '68 veterans still hold on to positions of official power in the State. If you want to find the epigones of '68, you will find them flourishing among the upper echelons of the staff of President Mitterrand's Socialist ministries. They are the guardians of a kind of thinking which the public is discarding; but it brought them their positions, early prestige and late power. After all, the meagre festival of 10 May 1981 was nothing but a mouldy rehash of the utopian, romantic movement of “imagination as power.” The *union de la gauche* was the bastard but legitimised daughter of that movement; so is its dissolution.

London Commentary

Transatlantic Differences

Getting Things Right & Wrong—By EDWARD PEARCE



I AM ALWAYS fascinated by the differences of assumption about politics made within one country and another. We see each other's heroes very differently: some reputations do not travel; others, like that of our Prime Minister, are vastly more in demand in the export trade than in the home market. Jimmy Carter, for all his eccentricities and fundamental inability to win international conflicts, was quite well liked in Britain. Camp David in particular had more supporters here than it did in the USA. To Americans generally, Carter is a form of political dog-food. He represents suppliant America, Mr Nice Guy with rolls of yellow commemorative ribbon draped over him, a loser, a high mind, a limp gesture incapable of conclusion.

Europe—which is to the liberal side of America, anxious about adventures and massively derisive about the Rambo outlook—perceived a decent man talking in a rational, if over-optimistic way and failing honourably because other people (Ayatollahs and such) were beyond reasonable access. Where America sees only failure, Europe sees decent premises. Further, it didn't feel scared in Mr Carter's time. It was concerned, certainly, that the SS-20s were building up, and in this context the President and his disarmament negotiator, Mr Warnke, seemed more than a whit trusting. But his time in office was emphatically not productive of anti-Americanism, rather the reverse. His Americans, despite the marginal antics of minor White House figures, were good men in a rough world for which they may have been rather too nice.

The European image of Ronald Reagan is equally divergent from the American one. Neo-conservatives will have to clench their teeth and endure this, for Mr Reagan is as profoundly, if tolerantly, despised here as a public man can be. The perception is of an amiable, slow-witted rationaliser of selfishness and pride on a continental scale. Contempt is, I am afraid, a weak word for Europe's view of the President. They see (and before the outraged letters come in, I merely report a view which is held) a cowboy actor unable to read serious books or documents, the willing tool of certain lobbies, and a Faustian dabbler in world conflicts which he is anxious to resolve by means too primitive and direct to be believed.

The gap which opened up between the US and its allies over the Libyan bombing was intergalactic. Britain has its own experience of terror, a much bigger experience than the handful of Arab strikes at American citizens in recent years. We can reproduce Mr Klinghofer and Sergeant Ford hundreds of times. The Irish Republican Army has across a decade been planting bombs in pubs for innocent people in Birmingham and Guildford to be blown up. Please God, we have got on top of them; but nobody would put any money on it. For our pains, we have the attentions of Manhattan's Jimmy Breslin and other Britain-haters in established places. Senator Dodd is still able to talk the lofty intolerable tosh that he does, and English soldiers (also innocent, by the way) get killed, as sixth item on the News, keeping the mad wing of the Gaels and the mad wing of the planters from the throats of people of both confessions in between.

We don't complain of it. We don't respond by seeking out and bombing the IRA in their well-defined resorts and places of seclusion. We try to work as well, as humanely, as we can with the Irish Republic, to give some sort of justice to the

constitutional Catholics of Northern Ireland, and we pay out money in subsidy to the Province to the point of folly.

It is very difficult, then, for the British (and by extension the Germans and Italians) to feel much empathy for the scratched-thumb, machine-gun ratio of American response to Libya. Of course Gaddafi is a loon; we thought that when his Embassy opened up on an unarmed girl police officer and killed her in St James's Square. But Mrs Thatcher has her heroic yearnings to herself. Seventy percent of the British population disapproved of her letting *F-111s* out of their Suffolk bases. If El Al had not been so alertly on its toes, and if consequently a plane with 350 people on board had disintegrated over London, there would have been successfully a Government crisis and an Anglo-American crisis.

As I write, the retaliatory bombs have either not been placed, or have been aborted. But fear of such consequences and anger at their provocation will influence policy for a long time to come. In authorising the raid, Mrs Thatcher in her customary democratic way consulted her Ministers hardly at all. The Foreign Secretary was left in the air, assuring the EEC that nothing would happen (whether in evasiveness or in ignorance is not clear); Ministers as disparate as Norman Tebbit, Nigel Lawson and Douglas Hurd were all unhappy with the decision. The consequence for Mrs Thatcher personally is that dislike of the American Administration, whose economic policies are almost the opposite of hers, has been transferred to her. Neil Kinnock's crack about "Senator Thatcher" went down well far outside narrow Labour or Left-wing circles. News that American tourist bookings had fallen off because the would-be tourists expected anti-British retaliation has not done our "special relationship" much good either.

We, it would seem, are dispensable, fit to be used, liable to get hurt. The allies who put us in such risk, and the leader who incurs it for us, can hardly expect the mood over here to be sympathetic. The grotesque Sylvester Stallone finally put a cherry on the ice-cream by pulling out of the Cannes Film Festival because he was scared. The maker (or perpetrator) of a clutch of junk films promoting a sort of romper-suit barbarism with the author as fighter (against a sinister Russian) and re-player of the Viet Nam war—the man who had become the derisive byword for the White House's war rhetoric—was windy.

AT A PROFOUND LEVEL, the disparity of attitudes is affecting internal politics. The Labour Party has made real efforts to temper both its image and its substantive policy; the one irreducible area of committed radicalism was its unilateralist view of nuclear disarmament and its wish to remove missiles and bases. As a general rule in a country which takes a robust view of self-defence (and does not panic like Mr Stallone) and does indeed distrust the Soviet Union, such an outlook has been a disadvantage. Indeed, one had expected to see the more raucous Conservatives like Michael Heseltine touring the country at the next election, denouncing Labour for running risks with our security.

Not any longer. Liability has turned into asset, and a determination to keep the Americans at arm's length has acquired a new respectability. The feeling that our safety has been trifled with is extensive. The dislike of the Libyan raid rests, after all, on the average man's observation that American Middle Eastern policy—which has "nothing to do with us" and is mistakenly activist—is likely to have consequences for us in terms of Arab terrorist action against the country from which the bombing raid was launched.

Personally, I emphatically do not endorse the general British attitude to Mr Reagan. By luck, fingertip judgment, and no shortfall of courage he has been far more successful than otherwise. Profoundly normal and sensibly un-neurotic, he has managed to make the Presidency popular and himself an object of real affection. The British and the Europeans do not take this on board, because they completely miss the element of national morale-building which has taken place in the 1980s. Discounting the rhetorical fringe-Right of American politics, and taking the President for the hard bargainer he has been in East-West relations, we see a transformation from the bullying and overreaching attitude of the Soviets less than eight years ago.

The President's nerve is that of a sensible man who does not readily get rattled. A slow pulse in the Oval Office is an asset beyond rubies. We panicked, or at least great numbers of Europeans did, on the question of Grenada. It turned out to have been a perfectly judged intervention, illegal of course, but forgivably so, in that it was over in a day-and-a-half, removed a couple of criminal lunatics in the New Jewel Movement ("Jewel kill we Children" is the phrase from very humble black women which sticks in my mind), and worked. The good ended happily, the bad unhappily; whether this turned Grenada into the international equivalent of fiction, who knows; but it did work and could be rejoiced at.

AS CERTAINLY, I think the Libyan raid wrong. We none of us, British or Americans, truly understand the psychology of the Middle East, its great oceanic movements of religion and nationalism. But we should know that the Middle East is not there for our convenience, to be moulded our way, whether "we" is the British at Suez, the Israelis in the Lebanon, the Russians playing a notably dirty game but with strikingly little effect, or America involving herself deeper and more enmiringly than her children will wish. Keeping a distance from the Middle East seems to me like the self-evident beginning of wisdom. But to the extent that one is involved, the raid was still surely mistaken—no crime or atrocity, but a mistake, because it scotches the snake but does not kill it. Perhaps, very tentatively, Muammar Gaddafi can be restrained, though men are not usually *smashed* into restraint. But if not Gaddafi, then Abu Nidal; and if not them then somebody else, with or without patrons, will be able to strike back.

This, for heaven's sake, is the age of the suitcase bomb. We no longer need an updated version of Sir Arthur "Bomber" Harris. That evil old man, who rightly saw himself as a war

criminal, can be duplicated with a couple of detonators in a shop doorway in Streatham High Street. Small miracles have been achieved by the investigating police to save us in respect of the IRA from infinitely worse than the bad we have endured. Sixteen bombs around the coastal holiday towns of England were planned for sixteen detonations in half-full hotels. The grace of God, and the wits of the Strathclyde police who swooped on the cache, alone stood between 2,000 people and death—planned to occur in batches, one explosion a day every day for a fortnight. You can't always count on El Al security and the Strathclyde police to snatch the brake. The only strike against terror when the target is so wide and terror itself so monstrously at leisure to take aim, is the unachievable act of comprehensive elimination. In plain terms, if we send a gunboat they will send one back.

The option of making selective war is not open to us. Where the President is mistaken and the anxious (if you like, arrogant) Europeans right, is that we do not want to run gratuitous risks whose only reward is the temporary feeling of satisfaction at doing something. The war with the IRA is deliberately not permitted to be escalated. Does anybody think that the British Army could not strike fearful blows at the enemy if it did not understand that thus are enemies multiplied and their reprisals made too great to bear? Of course we must avoid anti-Americanism, the envy and malice of the petulant Right and the programmed Left. But to tell the Americans that they are wrong, rationally to engage the Presidency, and to reconsider any further part in my subsequent raid, seems more like a duty.

Good relations between ourselves and the Americans

require that they should be given no illusions about the support they would have. Mr Reagan has spoken of the possibility of moving against Syria, a much bigger and nastier opponent than Libya any day. Well, he mustn't do it from here! Margaret Thatcher, resoundingly battered in the recent local elections and in two by-elections, may be absorbing this lesson—but in any case her Cabinet is unlikely to permit another go with the dangerous toys, and the projections made in this column about Mrs Thatcher's political demise are going on schedule so far.

However, once we are outside the specific issue of the Middle East and the response to terrorism, there will still be many pieces to pick up and many errors of perception to put right on this side of the Atlantic. We need a new start. We need less of the rather arrogant Brussels-centred EEC view of the world. We need to follow American politics with more attention and understanding than we do. We cannot afford poses or disdain. The West is shirty with itself, out of temper and taking refuge in effortless superiority.

There was once a comprehending diplomacy between the continents. I don't dream idly of the golden accord which linked us in the time of Truman, Attlee, Acheson and Bevin; but I am conscious that we are on both sides striking postures which could turn into stone. Criticism for my part derives wholly from affection. I tend to go along with that "last best hope" thesis about America in the knowledge that the most comprehensively open society in the world is better able to put right what it gets wrong than any other. But a great republic needs allies with fair minds, not Athenians hunched into disdain, and not under-footmen either.

Chernobyl

At night the darkening maze of branches
Threatens as the forest broods.
They heard it fidget, breathe,
And tried to estimate its moods,
Read omens as the ghost-owl mothed
Its way across the woods.

Such simples ruled them, and the knowing
Pitied their superstitious pain.
Reason replacing ignorant darkness,
We should not see such fear again.
Instead, unlocked the nuclear void,
We dread the innocence of rain.

John Cotton

History & Archaeology

Revisionism Reassessed

The Tudor Revolution a Generation Later—By G. R. ELTON



TUDOR HISTORY continues to bubble: every time one thinks that things have settled, the fire is relit under the cauldron. It is quite difficult now to recall the scene, some forty years ago, when by a series of accidents I found myself starting research on the reign of Henry VIII. A. F. Pollard, though he had ceased to work, still ruled that region; indeed, as I later discovered,

it was only because he had fallen into a final decline that I was allowed to set to work on a reign that he had not only made his own but regarded as his private and permanently pacified territory.

I could never understand his determination to keep other scholars outside the ring-fence, and I have always preferred a sense of active life to the quiet of the tomb. One result now looks no doubt predictable. Though I think that I am not yet senile and am still capable of working, I find myself cornered by the aspiring young bucks, with antlers lowered. The two volumes of essays here under review in the main endeavour to advance our understanding by questioning interpretations I have put forward over the past thirty years. One of them—*Revolution Reassessed*¹—specifically attacks what I have called the Tudor Revolution; the other, *Reassessing the Henrician Age*² (the more interesting of the two), contains pieces which modify my concentration on the 1530s as the crucial decade, and on Thomas Cromwell as the crucial statesman, of the Tudor age.

Well, I can still remember the delights of being a young Turk, and I regard it as a real compliment that five of the seven authors should have taken their first steps in research under my guidance. Furthermore, all but one of them speak

in such courteous tones that only an ass could possibly bristle. Who the exception might be will come as no surprise to anyone who watched the television “trial” of Richard III for the murder of the princes—a trial at which David Starkey, appearing as witness for the prosecution, won the day for the defence.

All these signs of life in old themes are highly welcome. Personally, I am grateful to my critics and correctors for enabling me to find out whether I have been sincere in saying things about the task of the historian—that none of us ever come to the end of our labours, and that all the history we write constitutes only staging posts on the road to better knowledge. Much of what these essays say is quite obviously true and very important: it does indeed call for major reassessments. No doubt I find it easier to say this because by no means all of it goes counter to views I have been putting forward these many years, but I also hold to the opinion that error, wherever committed, must be corrected.

AMONG THE CONTRIBUTORS TO *Revolution Reassessed* only the editors seem fully convinced that further research has altogether disposed of the administrative revolution of the 1530s. David Starkey, making large claims on slender grounds, denies what he calls my “creationist theories”, but not all the essayists support him. Christopher Coleman’s powerful essay on reforms in the Exchequer after 1554 convincingly disproves some rash forecasts I delivered in 1953; I think he underestimates the role of positive intention and over-stresses the accidental, but he certainly demonstrates to the full the criss-cross of influences that affected the fortunes of the financial organisation. He is absolutely right to reject my talk about a completion of “Cromwellian” reform. Perhaps it is a pity that he stops at 1572 when Burghley, as Lord Treasurer, began to clean up some stables with the help of Sir Walter Mildmay, Chancellor of the Exchequer, and Sir William Cordell, Master of the Rolls; Burghley was the first man since Cromwell’s fall of a mind and in a position to pick up lines of action discarded in 1540. He was, after all, the outstanding example of that university-trained administrator that Cromwell is known to have tried to bring into government service. However, none of this weakens Coleman’s demonstration that I was wrong to see

¹ *Revolution Reassessed: Revision in the History of Tudor Government and Administration*. Edited by CHRISTOPHER COLEMAN and DAVID STARKEY. Clarendon Press, Oxford, £22.50, paper £7.95.

² *Reassessing the Henrician Age: Humanism, Politics and Reform 1500-1550*. Edited by ALISTAIR FOX and JOHN GUY. Basil Blackwell, £22.50. (To be published in mid-July.)

the changes before 1572 in the light of “Cromwellian principles.”

Reading his essay against the most striking display of pure scholarship in the volume—James Alsop’s “The Structure of Early-Tudor Finance”—brings out the degree to which that side of government had been profoundly changed in the wake of the expansion of machinery in the 1530s and its contraction in the 1550s. Alsop shows clearly that accident and inertia played a larger role than I had supposed, but he does affirm Cromwell’s creative contribution to the handling of the money-collecting agencies—his decision to employ new-style departments where others wished to revert to Henry VII’s use of the King’s Chamber. He deepens and enlarges the transformational interpretation and still regards the 1530s as central to the event.

One contribution to the volume—Jennifer Loach on Parliament—seems a little out of place here; its contribution to the revision, welcome in itself, does not concern the notion of a Tudor revolution as presented in 1953. In proving that the enfranchisement of boroughs was nothing new in the 16th century, she seems really to be battling with the views of Sir John Neale. My own arguments, developed more recently, for discovering a major transformation of the institution in the first half of the century depend on the analysis of records she does not touch on. However, this is a corner of the field in which much of the new work remains to be done; the full debate will no doubt come in due course.

MUCH MUST OBVIOUSLY TURN ON the central reform, the appearance of the restricted Privy Council and the discarding of the earlier large King’s Council. This question is tackled by John Guy both in *Revolution Reassessed* and also in *Reassessing the Henrician Age*, the book he co-edited himself. He provides an excellently clear account of the successive phases in the large Council’s history and of the repeated efforts to organise a more effective limited Council, but he does not prove (as Starkey seems to think he does) that the final reform under Cromwell was no more than yet another such momentary recasting. After 1536, councillors were either real—members of the new Privy Council—or notional, being called “ordinary” (a term not encountered before) to take account of their personal survival from a body now extinct.

Guy seems to regard the transformation of 1536 as an accidental by-product of the northern crisis of that year, but that is not so. Cromwell contemplated it at least two years earlier and achieved it before ever rebellion broke out in Lincolnshire, as the exclusion of the Lord Mayor of London, hitherto always sworn of the Council, indicates. The only accident in the story is the survival of letters signed by councillors and demonstrating their corporate action in the course of suppressing the Pilgrimage of Grace. Those letters were fortuitously preserved by a 17th-century collector (apparently with access to the Duke of Norfolk’s archive). Since Council letters, directed to all sorts of people all over the realm, were exceptionally threatened by loss, nothing can be argued for institutional questions from their presence or

absence. I thus remain persuaded that Cromwell achieved the reorganisation of the old Council in 1536, but I fully accept that in doing so he carried out plans frequently contemplated before. Dale Hoak’s contribution shows very clearly that Cromwell’s reform could be adapted to the peculiar events of Mary I’s reign and he does not seem to regard this as affecting our assessment of Cromwell’s work. I agree.

THAT LEAVES David Starkey’s contributions, including his noticeably tendentious summing-up. Starkey does not take kindly to being criticised, but I will take my courage in both hands. In substance, he puts forward two arguments. One of his essays maintains that my basic notion of reliance for administration moving from the royal household to the building up of “national” machinery is false: Tudor government continued throughout to be in the hands of the monarch and depended on his use of his personal entourage. Years ago, Starkey unveiled the deeply significant story of the royal Privy Chamber, a new department of the royal court brought into prominence in the reign of Henry VII; in particular, he showed how it was used to serve the King in matters secretarial and financial. That achievement stands. There is no question that in my original work I overestimated Cromwell’s success in separating the government of the realm from the king’s curial agencies, though I continue to think that that is what he was trying to do. The political role of the Privy Chamber is of no importance in this context: all of us have always known that the making of high policy and the rivalries of ambition never “went out of court” in the 16th century.

However, Starkey completed the work here summarised in 1974, since when further work has tended to show that he seriously over-stressed the importance of the Privy Chamber by concentrating on its age of glory in the reign of Henry VIII, especially the last years of it; I cannot agree with his reading of Cromwell’s relations to that department (which amounted to a cold-shouldering rather than a cooperation with it) and after 1547 the Privy Chamber by degrees dropped out of the administration, nor did it pass the torch to any other household agency. Instead it left the stage to the public structures which, I still maintain, Cromwell preferred to use and to develop among the possibilities inherited from the past.

Starkey further did sterling work, re-used here, in introducing us to the political role of court faction, but he now seems to me to overstate his case: faction seems really to have mattered occasionally in some crises; normally, all government (wherever exercised) strove for unity under monarchs who expected no less. Starkey’s other theme offers a new interpretation of the 15th century, which he regards as dominated by movements for reform which make Cromwell’s decade appear at best as a pale continuation of a long-standing ground-swell. This rests on some highly contestable reading of difficult sources which it would break the back of this review to engage with at length. All I can say is that I do not believe this novel view and hope to attend to it some other time.

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THE ESSAYS written and collected by Alistair Fox and John Guy—*Reassessing the Henrician Age*—bear only in part on the arguments of *Revolution Reassessed*, though Guy's careful look at the relations between King and Church from 1485 onwards helps to reduce the striking originality which I once ascribed to Cromwell's régime. Guy also continues his important analysis of the writings and thought of Christopher St German, whom he now advances, with good reason, as a major deviser of innovations in policy and in law.

I might argue with a number of details in his essays. Thus, for instance, his depiction of the King's Council as a body controlling rather than serving royal rule gives us some hesitant notions entertained in some quarters rather than the facts of Tudor life; from the 1480s onwards, at any rate, such councils could exist only if in effect there was no King. Every expression of such "constitutionalist" ideas is then either wistful or strictly antiquarian. At the same time, these outdated notions could be useful to dissatisfied men, and Guy's essay helps us to understand what happened in 1640. In the history of the Tudor Council oppositional dreams played no part.

The rediscovery of St German affects our understanding of the era of the Reformation, while Fox in his essays on Tudor humanism engages with that phenomenon from another and highly original angle. His propositions may yet prove the most fruitful of all the revisions and renovations presented in these two volumes. Fox declares himself dissatisfied with the monolithic concept of humanism at present current, a concept which fails to distinguish quite separate strands and takes refuge in ascribing a dominant influence to Erasmus (and More). His first attempts at drawing proper distinctions and estimating the developments that grew therefrom are very persuasive, even if he himself warns us that much more work will be needed before the scene becomes clear. I especially like his essay on the use in the 16th century of some very old political prophecies which helps to teach us neither to see innovation in every corner nor to deny it simply because the mode of expression remains traditional.

Fox hits several nails squarely on the head. He is right to refuse the title of humanist to More from 1533 at the latest; he is right to draw attention to Stephen Gardiner as proof for the fact that a humanist background did not necessarily imply unanimity in matters of religion; he is right to present Thomas Elyot as a man out of touch with the central stream of English humanism rather than as its representative. These are highly promising, indeed exciting, beginnings.

SO WHERE, after this discharge of two powerful barrels, loaded with nails as well as buckshot, do we stand in respect of the age of Henry VIII? Is the Tudor Revolution dead, and must we cease to speak of an onset of "modernity"? As I have explained before, I am not happy with those loaded terms, medieval and modern, but I can find no other words to express something that seems to me manifestly to have happened. Anyone moving from intensive work on the records of Henry VIII's reign to those of

Elizabeth's knows that his world has changed. Language, modes of thought, a spiritual framework, intellectual commonplaces, social conventions have all altered noticeably, in spite of many continuities in the amalgam. The "feel" of the second half of the century is certainly not modern if by modern we mean our own times, but it is strikingly altered from that of the era running down to about 1530.

I have not been alone in discovering drastic change: John Baker has demonstrated it for that central fact of Tudor life, the common law, and even abolishing the Tudor Revolution will not abolish the Reformation. The unity and the claims of the state, not infrequently spoken of before in the face of an unreceptive political nation, had become dominant and commonplace by the time that Elizabeth ascended the throne, and the claims of the Church had surrendered to a subordination at best adumbrated before. Those were real changes at the heart of the political structure, and it remains true that innovations in the manner in which the realm was governed form one powerful guide to the course of events. The student of Elizabethan finance must start work from the records of the tellers of the Exchequer which are marginal to the student of Henrician finance. Such things indicate truths. If "revolution" is reckoned too strong a term, any denial of a structural transformation first explicit in the 1530s still flies in the face of the facts.

ON THE OTHER HAND, it is manifestly true that that first book of mine, like any other serious work of history, was a staging post on the road and not a final destination. And though over the years I had modified several of its conclusions I had clearly not gone far enough along that road towards further milestones. I overstated the decline of the King's household in the running of the polity. I overstated the novelty of the ideas and intentions that lay behind the drastic deeds of the 1530s and that can now be seen to have been around for quite some time. I overstated both the originality and the achievement of Thomas Cromwell. What I saw as a dramatic moment of transformation, guided by one man's hand and mind, has turned out to be the consolidation, often tentative and somewhat incomplete, of a half-century's labours, prepared for and guided by quite a regiment of princes.

That, I think is the message of these essays, and indeed, work so far unpublished says it too. Yet a lusty baby remains in the tub after the bathwater has been drained. Cromwell may not have been the inventor of innovation, but he was there to assist it into existence when circumstances became helpful. St German may have developed some of the important grounds of principle which supported the final victory of common law over canon law, of statute over edict, of a unitary state over inherited particularism. But we should not even know of those ideas of his if his memorials had not finished up in Thomas Cromwell's archive. There was the nodal point to which all the earlier "trends" gravitated—to the mind and the person of that Minister of the Crown and the action generated by him. Cromwell did not create the great changes out of his own head but he took up the work

fully conscious of what he was doing. Without him they would still not have happened.³

The argument between especially Starkey and myself turns chiefly on our different judgment of Cromwell. In Starkey's view, Cromwell reacted pragmatically to circumstances, adapting himself and his doings to immediate circumstances without any larger plans in his mind. I, on the other hand, see him as working to a coherent programme of serious reform in State and Church, adjusting at need to circumstances but helping them along towards his desired ends and using whatever came to hand to assist his unchanging purposes. And some things we can learn about the man do support my reading of him.

The pious researches of a descendant preserved some revealing remarks of Cromwell's that were recorded in David Lloyd's *State-Worthies*, first published in 1665. Even as he saw his road ahead clear, Cromwell could laugh at himself.

"He used to answer those that applauded his service to the Reformation that if he should arrogate to himself any part in that revolution of providence he would be like the fly on the cartwheel that said, what a dust do I raise."

That maker of policy preferred men of learning who did not boast "pedantically" of their reading but wished to use it in practice: the collection of policy documents in his keeping bears witness to the truth of this. He liked men "who were (as he called them) like the statues of Apollo, had a lance in one hand and a harp in another—that is, resolution to awe on the one side and sweetness to oblige on the other." Cromwell might like to think that that revolution of his was the work of providence, but he knew what he was doing; some flies can give the cartwheel a mighty powerful kick.

MOVING FROM THESE thunders of scholarly argument to Lacey Baldwin Smith's book, *Treason in Tudor England*,⁴ is to exchange the meat-grinder for a vat of brimstone and treacle. Smith's vision of the century is entirely his own, and a very strange one it is.

Most of us had thought that treason had something to do with politics and the law, that in the 16th century it seemed so ever-present because the age witnessed great upheavals, ideological conflicts, and the dangers of foreign invasions—and also because in so uncertain a public life more and more activities came to be defined as treason. Not so: we learn now that it was all a matter of social and individual psychology. The age was paranoid. People committed the treasons which (says the author) they knew could end only in a horrible death because they were driven by their conviction that the devil was abroad and was exciting their enemies to do dark deeds against them.

We had thought that men pursued ends derived from ambition or perhaps from religious faith, ends which put them

in opposition to the powers that were, and that when they lost the law of treason stood there to deal with them. Not at all, according to Professor Smith: they did so because the frightful demands of the education they received, the calls of their passionate faith, and their experience of public life all assured them that they could never hope to meet God's demands on them in a world peopled by personal enemies: and so they lashed out.

There is in this book not a word on the law (though attention to the law might have prevented some errors), and the number of actual treason cases discussed is minimal. Instead we have an attack on humanist education with its belief in stern self-control, a condemnation of the belief in evil as a positive thing in the human existence, and a vast and heterogeneous collection of bitter remarks some of which even the collector regards as untypical. A "culturally and educationally induced paranoia" governed Tudor public life, and from it grew all that treason which, Professor Smith reminds us, "never prospers." But the inventor of that phrase notoriously assumed that it might indeed prosper and thus lose the name of treason, a point ignored by Smith. We thus get a century which unlike (it is expressly stated) every other was mad.

Well, it is a charming and very colourful story, written with great verve and frequent elegance, and it is also highly entertaining fiction. The scholarship is of the kind often described as "lightly worn", which means that the book rests on wide yet selective and indiscriminating reading. Positive errors are not few, and quite undue respect is paid to

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³ Stop press: the latest news is that the Tudor revolution in government may be on the way back.

⁴ *Treason in Tudor England: Politics and Paranoia*. By LACEY BALDWIN SMITH. Jonathan Cape, £16.00.

whatever might buttress the theory—including some sources and historians that had long lost credence.

What gives substance to the book are the four chapters (out of nine) that deal with the rebellion of the Earl of Essex, for Essex unquestionably displayed the paranoid symptoms here highlighted. But Essex was also a thoroughly untypical traitor: he had absolutely no claim to the crown, he did not differ in religion from the government he attacked, and so far from being slighted he had been treated with kindness and forbearance. Unlike most traitors, he had to imagine his enemies. To generalise from his behaviour and fate is really very misleading. The overheated atmosphere that pervades this book is not to be found in most treasonable conspiracies of the century, and much less still in the law's cool handling of this ultimate crime. On the other hand, conspiracy theories and deep suspicions of rivals are not rare among the politicians of any age.

THE STRANGEST ASPECT of this book lies elsewhere. Through it all runs a conviction that the 20th century has grown out of all those devil-seeking phobias that Smith detects in the 16th.

Today, we are told more than once, we no longer identify evil as active in the world and personified in a given opponent; nowadays we understand the social pressures and circumstances which produce conflict and disappointment.

Hidden behind this richly worked arras lurks a deep respect for the modern social sciences, seen to have cleansed the political world from paranoid suspicions. Professor Smith lives and teaches at Evanston, Illinois, which here begins to look like another planet. He may be forgiven for some inaccurate impressions of Europe in both the 16th century and the present, and his description as pernicious of an education that emphasises self-control and moral behaviour reveals more about current educational ideas and concepts of child psychology in America than about Tudor paranoia. But has he already forgotten the hysteria over Watergate? Has he lately looked at newspapers or television? If there is one region in the 20th century where they identify political problems with the machinations of evil persons and see Satan stalking the world, it is surely that region which calls a rival state not Russia but "the Soviets" and homes in on an Arab colonel as the devil in person.

How much treason does all that paranoia generate?

Recording the Evidence

On Modern Archaeology—By PETER LEVI



ARCHAEOLOGY is not precisely a science, but more like a family of techniques, as surgery is: something which may serve and always presupposes science. We have come a long way from its origins in the Renaissance, when as a serious pursuit it started as an attempt to recover the buried treasures of antiquity. Even Stonehenge was then assumed to be Roman, because of its impressive size, and that view was at least an improvement on

thinking it was brought to England by magic or by giants. The Inigo Jones church in Covent Garden is based on his opinions about its proportions.

Nowadays digging for treasure is viewed with contempt by professional archaeologists, though of course it still happens, and some of its results are nice to have. But it is, alas, destructive. Digging mostly ruins the evidence of the earth and of every fragile object; the evidence can be read only by the excavators, and once only, so nowadays they prefer to be extremely careful.

So we treat archaeology as a way of knowing, a method which is as much part of historical study as the interpretation of documents and much of art history. The trouble here is that field archaeologists or dirt archaeologists have the bit

between their teeth. They are inclined to answer only those questions which their special techniques are adapted to answer, and while this makes excellent sense in prehistory, it may involve a conflict of interest in better-documented periods where the established historians feel they have already set the most important questions.

Most modern excavators feel the need to use the most refined techniques, and that slows down the work. At one time they confined their attentions to the bigger and better fragments of pottery, and to the presence and succession of distinct types. Then they started sieving the dust to determine the proportions in which things were present. Now they have a paraffin precipitation test. The extent of a human settlement used to be assessed by its physical ruins. Now the surrounding soil is tested for potassium. Since this generally denoted excretion, it is hardly surprising that it goes beyond the buildings, but the question is how much potassium extending how far? Then there is the question of surrounding field-systems, which are often visible to the eye, though they were neglected by the greatest archaeologists of the 19th century. And the analysis of human bones has become a science in itself. Archaeologists need a considerable back-up of workshops and laboratories, and their libraries get bigger and bigger. Individual specialists are drifting out of sight of one another, as their sciences ramify.

Science likes to deal with whatever can be quantified,

which leaves some of the ancient art experts looking amateurishly old-fashioned. But the old days really were scandalous. The first complete Greek city graveyard to be entirely excavated in Sicily, or I think anywhere else, has been dug only in the last ten or fifteen years. For the first time ever, we know the precise proportion of rich and poor. The vigour and the swarms of workmen with which great sites used to be attacked is terrifying by modern standards. These standards have triumphed only very recently, in the generation still living. One of its instruments has been a stream of highly professional and scientifically minded young people, armed with doctorates and expert in special techniques. But the public who watch television and gaze at the treasures in glass cases still mostly think of archaeology as the simple recovery of buried things, and they are separated from the sharp edge of the subject by unreadable scientific publications. Some of the books designed to help them at a more readable level are excellent, but some are sloppy, and on some one can break one's teeth.

THE MOST APPETISING BOOKS are not the most rewarding, and the brighter-looking ideas often result in a kind of book-making. The environment, the green earth, or whatever one is supposed to call it, has become a bandwagon of which popular archaeology is the hub of one wheel. *The Stones of Britain*,¹ for instance, is a fascinating promise, but the subject is really too general. Richard Muir knows his subject in detail, but Britain is too big for him. One can get much better maps from the Geological Society, and one should remember that Arkell, in a book of similar length thirty years ago or more, scarcely exhausted even the stones of Oxford. Richard Muir discusses the roofing stone called Stonesfield slate with little grasp of how far the vein extends or how far the slates travelled, and speaks mournfully of a lack of evidence for weathered slates before 1676, when Robert Plot recorded them. But one does not need to rely on literary evidence. Stonesfield church is 13th-century, and there are numerous datable buildings roofed with weathered slate that might have been noticed. The point is a small one, and Mr Muir's book is full of interesting bits and pieces, but one must not think that he or anyone else can cover the whole subject of his title without a lifetime of research, *nez à terre*.

The British Museum has a good series, spectacularly well illustrated but in other ways sometimes uneven. *Prehistoric Britain* by I. H. Longworth² is enthralling, and full of new insights. I was glad to see the further reading list included R. Bradley's *Social Foundations of Prehistoric Britain* (Longman, 1984), which seems to me epoch-making, disposing of old problems and raising new ones. But even in so short a list, some reference ought to be made to *Prehistoric Art in Europe* by Nancy Sandars (revised Pelican edition, 1985), because both art and Europe are essential to this subject. Discs of amber, framed in gold, seem to have come

¹ *The Stones of Britain: Landscapes and Monuments, Quarries and Cathedrals*. By RICHARD MUIR. Michael Joseph, £15.95.

² *Prehistoric Britain*. By I. H. LONGWORTH. British Museum Publications, £4.95.

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to Britain from the eastern Mediterranean when Stonehenge was young.

Archaeologists use terms that the rest of us have to look up, their language having been set in an earlier generation: words like nave and palstave, half-flanged and crotals (which are rattle-bells, fortunately illustrated). They have a particular and likeable precision. One wonders, for example, who first classified the carp's tongue sword. Prehistorians are forced to trace historical changes through technical changes, and it is astonishing how coherent a picture of the past a great expert like Longworth can produce, even in what is scarcely more than a pamphlet.

FOR INSULAR READERS of archaeology, Britain comes first, and rightly so, because so much of the history of the islands is present in the landscape, like a mysterious undeciphered language that comments on our nature. The grassy heavings of Maiden Castle and the nodding rocks of Stonehenge have a real importance for us, even if their meaning is enigmatic. Archaeology deciphers them. Modern investigations have reversed old beliefs about Britain, revealing huge estates where we imagined a few clusters of huts, sophistication and international connections where we accepted that life had been primitive, and a flourishing agriculture that declined under the Romans where we were taught the opposite. The naked eye cannot read those things in the landscape; only scientific archaeology can discover them. Nor can anything else give context and meaning to treasures of ancient art or monuments of antiquity. In most parts of Britain there are still puzzling local monuments, but one can argue about them by analogy with those that have been scientifically examined. Many that were once thought to be military are now revealed as agricultural. *Archaeology in Britain since 1945*, edited by I. H. Longworth and John Cherry,³ is a judicious survey of advances over a huge range of material. It is extremely well written, and necessary reading for historians.

IT IS A RELIEF to have Barbara Bender's solid guide to *The Archaeology of Brittany, Normandy and the Channel Islands*,⁴ because most people visit those coasts at some time, and they have a particular relevance to British archaeology, by close analogy, by constant interconnection, and at times by contrast. One might wish that the guide extended eastwards to include Belgium, but that would make it a fat book. One might also wish that most of the monuments were not neolithic, or that the guide did not stop more or less with the Romans, though it does contain a peppering of Romanesque churches.

³ *Archaeology in Britain since 1945*. Edited by I. H. LONGWORTH and JOHN CHERRY. British Museum Publications, £12.50.

⁴ *The Archaeology of Brittany, Normandy and the Channel Islands*. By BARBARA BENDER. Faber, £12.95.

⁵ *A Regional History of England: The Northern Counties to AD 1000*. By NICK HIGHAM. Longman, £25.00, paper £12.50.

⁶ *The Bog Man and the Archaeology of People*. By DON BROTHWELL. British Museum Publications, £5.95.

This is as if the pure-minded archaeologist should scorn the obvious and the recorded. My own view is that an archaeological guide-book to these places should include the ports and canals, and every bridge and village. This more rarefied book is more for dolmen-lovers. It has excellent maps and drawings and some muddy photographs, and tells one such useful things as the opening times of small museums. It is particularly good at whereabouts and comparative worthwhileness. But why should a thousand-year-old tree with two chapels inside it (NNE of Caudebec-en-Caux) be visited only "if you have children"? And one does not really need to be told that the meetings of Guernsey witches at St Saviour "were sufficiently important for the devil himself to attend." These attempts to relieve the lugubrious dullness of ancient graves and coarse pottery misfire. More worrying still, the author believes the Bayeux tapestry to be late 12th-century work. Perhaps that was only a slip of the pen.

STERNER STUFF altogether is *A Regional History of England: The Northern Counties to AD 1000* by Nick Higham.⁵ It is part of a Regional History of England, but history is not its strength. The period from 685 to 1000 is crammed into 50 laconic pages, austere illustrations. The author is clearly a scientific archaeologist, exuding information like a pile of pebbles, and as a corrective this book is just what one needs, though it will scarcely attract a wide public, being unsmoothly written and not without jargon. All the same it tells one exactly what one wants to know, and improves on those huge standard works in which one may delve in vain.

Its maps and plans are particularly striking. The land-holdings of the community of St Cuthbert, taken from an article by C. D. Morris in a learned periodical, are staggering. The post-Roman hamlet at Thirlings is fascinating. The ditched enclosure at Castlesteads revealed by crop-marks seen from the air is not only interesting but somehow very beautiful and moving. This is the most deeply enjoyable and informative of all these studies, and one should not be put off by its academic sternness. But it covers only what lies between Yorkshire and Hadrian's Wall, and even so one wishes at times to probe into the more confusing mass of detail that underlies its lapidary lucidity. This book is a new and more reliable summary and starting-point for social and economic history. It is also a brilliant reading of some of the most attractive landscape in England.

BOG PEOPLE, the bodies preserved in the bogs where they were buried, are much more romantic, and the disgusting contents of their stomachs please the public, but one may choose to regard the conjectures they give rise to with a beady eye. The British Museum has celebrated its very own corpse, dug up in Cheshire in 1984, with a special booklet boldly entitled *The Bog Man and the Archaeology of People*,⁶ which speaks of Lindow Man as if he were a species in himself, poor fellow, and of "the palaeopathology of the whole body."

I suppose it is inevitable that forensic scientists and others should rejoice over these gruesome victims, and that traces of mistletoe pollen in their gut should excite the Druidically minded. (I wish I knew whether Virgil's golden bough was mistletoe, but I doubt it.) All the same one cannot help feeling that the corpse should have been offered the hospitality of Christian reburial, and I for one shall not be queuing up to stare at it. The book is full of strange information, but it adds little to archaeology. There are many small excavations, conducted as it were with microscope and soft-haired toothbrush, that would tell one more.

FOR THE IMMEDIATE understanding of human beings and societies utterly different from our own, classical archaeology is still supreme. It needs to concentrate far more than it usually does on economic and social factors, which it tends to leave to the prehistorians and Dark Age historians, relying in its own period rather on written records and inscribed stones, and over-concentrating on brilliant achievements. But the works of art and the physical monuments it deals with really are dazzling, and they do communicate with an immediacy that pieces of *Kordbandkeramik* cannot command, though I admit that prehistoric grass-polished pottery has aesthetics of its own—more so perhaps than any but the best of Greek painted vases.

The new *Oxford History of the Classical World*⁷ puts the case for the classics extremely strongly, and pays plenty of attention to what used to be neglected areas of the subject, including archaeology. It is surely salutary to realise how provincial British history was for so very long, by comparison. Even our scriptures came to us by way of Latin and Greek, and our greatest medieval sculpture has a Byzantine element. Our Elizabethan Renaissance owed more than we imagine to Italy and the rediscovered classics. Shakespeare's sonnets echo Ovid's rhetoric, and our best prose is classical. As we drift further away from those origins, we need such a book. The classics are too important to be left to classicists, just as archaeology is too important to be left to learned periodicals. The impetus to serious study of the past is aesthetic and historical, it is not just technical.

BUT SCHOOLCHILDREN—and I suppose most of us—like to be told about everyday life in the past. There have always been such books about the Egyptians, because the Egyptians filled their great tombs with representations of this world. The pictures are moving sometimes, but the books are jejune because they are not really histories. (One learns more from

The Northern Counties.) It may be true that some Egyptian children were breast-fed for three years, but the fact calls for more annotation. A lot of people will buy the latest British Museum booklet, *Egyptian Life* by Miriam Stead,⁸ *faute de mieux*, but one needs something much more solid. *Greek and Roman Life* by Ian Jenkins⁹ is slightly more successful, because its materials are so extensive, but the Greeks differed so much by region, and the Romans so vastly by date from the Greeks, that the enterprise is doomed. It pays too little attention to literature (Aristophanes for instance) and far too little to social anthropology. The authors are not to blame, but the publishers lack imagination. The pamphlets produced by the American Agora excavation in Athens are very much more useful than these.

In books intended to forward archaeological or historical science, usefulness is paramount. Take amphorae for example. They are often stamped on the handle, and the pioneering work on them was done by Virginia Grace of the American Agora team in Athens many years ago. Whole shiploads of them are quite often recoverable from wrecks. In the late 1960s the best guide to amphorae, including a kind of observer's chart of shapes and dates and origins, was produced by the Marseilles museum service.

It is amazing how much can be learnt from amphorae. Two scholars at Southampton—D. P. S. Peacock and D. F. Williams—have now produced a handbook to Roman amphorae.¹⁰ Their painted markings naturally figured in the corpus of Latin inscriptions in the 19th century, an age when

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⁷ *The Oxford History of the Classical World*. Edited by JOHN BOARDMAN, JASPER GRIFFIN and OSWYN MURRAY. Oxford University Press, £25.00.

⁸ *Egyptian Life*. By MIRIAM STEAD. British Museum Publications, £4.95.

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¹⁰ *Amphorae and the Roman Economy*. By D. P. S. PEACOCK and D. F. WILLIAMS. Longman, £28.00.

great confidence in the future generated the self-sacrificing usefulness of such enormous long-term enterprises. But we are now told that "it was during the 1970s that amphora studies really became accepted." The authors do refer to Virginia Grace, and they do notice Roman analogies with Greek vessels, but we need, if not a corpus, then an amphora computer to record all shapes and inscriptions and physical data. Until we get that, we have at least this useful and very thorough survey of part of the subject. But without quantification there is no science, and quantified data have begun to be available only in the last ten years.

So what is to be done? It is not only treasure-hunting that destroys evidence; industrial and agricultural development do the same. Every country now has to conduct rescue digs, where too little is done in a hurry at the last moment. Every country has conservation problems, and the more thorough an archaeologist has been the worse his publication problem

will be. Archaeology could usefully be computerised on a vaster scale than anyone can afford. It takes time for the skills developed by prehistorians, many of them in Britain, to diffuse themselves through what has now become a numerous international profession. The cross-fertilisation of different areas and traditions of archaeological study pays heavy dividends, but that takes a generation. The best archaeologists are the most imaginative ones, the least boring ones. It is to be hoped that the professionalisation of archaeology will leave loopholes for such people.

The human imagination is still, within the necessary disciplines, the fundamental instrument of archaeology. But good archaeologists, as Cocteau said of poets, do not need to be applauded, they need to be listened to, and to be believed. They also need money. It should not be given to institutions, which put it into bricks and mortar, but to excavations and the publication of reports.

Cunning Passages

Varieties of History—By RICHARD MAYNE



TS. ELIOT, who like Max Beerbohm discovered very early in life the secret of perpetual age, was only thirty-one when he wrote *Gerontion*: but he gave it the long perspective of the past.

*After such knowledge, what forgiveness? Think now
History has many cunning passages, contrived corridors
And issues, deceives with whispering ambitions,
Guides us by vanities. Think now
She gives when our attention is distracted
And what she gives, gives with such supple confusions
That the giving famishes the craving.*

Many historians, I suspect, could echo that "famishes"; and many laymen, nowadays, are acquainted with the craving. As changes become headlong, and the products of technology more forbidding and alien, an imagined past becomes a refuge or a yardstick. Nostalgia, as Simone Signoret reminded us in the title of her autobiography, is no longer what it was. For some, it's now a consuming passion. Pageants and conservation; young fogies and popular history; fashion revivals and TV costume dramas—all suggest dissatisfaction with the present and disenchantment with the future. Nor is this a merely European mood, lamenting lost empires with slightly furtive relish redeemed by dutiful guilt.

Americans too are contemplating their history; and for every confessional account of how cruelly the West was won, there's at least a glance at the world of Owen Wister. Outside a gun factory in Connecticut, there's even a statue of John Wayne.

Now thrive the armourers—and the publishers of period picture-books, and antique dealers, and sellers of ancestral homes. They offer vicarious pedigrees, no doubt: a late admission to charmed circles. As E. M. Forster remarked,

"It is pleasant to be transferred from an office where one is afraid of a sergeant-major into an office where one can intimidate generals, and perhaps this is why History is so attractive to the more timid among us. We can recover self-confidence by snubbing the dead."

But there must be more to it than that. Guided tours of country mansions scarcely invite the visitor to hobnob with the owners, dead or alive: the silken rope divides them as firmly as time itself. Yet guided tours appease some wistful hunger. For rank? For imagined "gracious living"? Not quite. The real quest, I believe, is for continuity and a context. To touch the rough warm stone of a lichened monument is to feel a momentary kinship with those who built or carved it, and are gone, as we shall go. It places our life in the long succession of things: an oddly comforting *memento mori*. No wonder the past can become a kind of religion.

How we perceive and use it is the subject of the book which prompted these reflections, David Lowenthal's *The Past is a Foreign Country*.¹ Professor Lowenthal is an American who has worked in Britain and the West Indies as well as in the

¹ *The Past is a Foreign Country*. By DAVID LOWENTHAL. Cambridge University Press, £27.50, paper £9.95.

United States, and whose fields include geography, race relations, landscape architecture, political science, and environmental psychology as well as history. In his sixty-three years he has graced at least a dozen seats of learning. As one might expect, therefore, his book is eclectic, and may be mistrusted by narrower specialists, who will probably scour it for original "sources" and meet mainly secondary references to other scholars' research. At times, I too felt that it contained Meditations on a Card-Index or a well-stocked data base: the headlong rush of brilliantly apposite quotations far outpaced the slow march of the central thesis. This, as Professor Lowenthal announces,

"... comprises three broad themes. How the past alike enriches and impoverishes us, and the reasons we embrace or shun it, comprise Chapters 1 to 4. How our recollections and our surroundings make us aware of the past, and how we respond to such knowledge, occupies Chapter 5. Why and how we change what has come down to us, to what ends its vestiges, like our memories, are salvaged or contrived, and how these alterations affect our heritage and ourselves, are the themes of Chapter 6 and 7. Throughout I seek to show how the past, once virtually indistinguishable from the present, has become an ever more foreign realm, yet one increasingly suffused by the present."

That passage occurs on p. xix of the Introduction. In the Conclusion on p. 412, just before 57 pages of Bibliography, we read:

"The past remains integral to us all, individually and collectively. We must concede the ancients their place, as I have argued. But their place is not simply back there, in a separate and foreign country; it is assimilated in ourselves, and resurrected into an ever-changing present."

Truly, the journey not the arrival matters. And the journey, though long, is rewarding. "Look at that castle", our guide will cry—or, more typically, murmur. "Do you recall how it looked before you saw its later imitation? See how Gothic Revival has infected your view of Gothic. But remember too that those who revived it had in their heads a vision of the Middle Ages which they thought as authentic as ours. They didn't set out to build Victorian Municipal—any more than our own neo-traditionalists think of themselves as producing Credit Card Georgian."

That imaginary dialogue conveys Professor Lowenthal's method, if not his tone. His illustrations—105 of them—vividly embody the point he's continually making: that the past is in the present, and the present in our vision of the past. Some of the pictures have an incongruity so sharp as to be sickening. The best, or worst, example is a main road near Southampton, where a mock-Tudor house nestles against a pathetic fragment of Roman wall, duly railed off from the pavement. The funniest is a cartoon from *The New Yorker*, of two ladies in an astonishingly over-stuffed Victorian drawing-room, taking tea amid ubiquitous ornaments. "Well, Emmeline", the visitor asks, "What's new?"

To ask that of Professor Lowenthal would be rather unfair. The novelty of his book lies not in its conclusions but in,

yes, its ornaments—the vast array of learning he deploys to illuminate his detailed disquisition. Reading it is rather like exploring a complex tapestry, a pictorial carpet, or a cathedral's narrative façade. One's less enlightened than enriched. And not the least of the attractions is the companionship of a mind that's alert, sympathetic, and self-questioning, inducing one to pause and ponder when the temptation is to speed on.

ONE SERVICE the book performs is to remind us that we almost always distort the past. W. R. Inge, the once celebrated Dean of St Paul's, put it trenchantly:

"What we know of the past is mostly not worth knowing. What is worth knowing is mostly uncertain. Events in the past may roughly be divided into those which probably never happened and those which do not matter."

Two cheers, one feels like adding. But Inge himself continued with what most historians would think a heresy:

"To predict the future . . . is not only the most important part of the work of an historian; it is the most scientific and least imaginative part of his duties. Our chief interest in the past is as a guide to the future."

George Santayana flirted with the same thought when he observed that "Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it." Yet, comforting as the remark may

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be to historians doubting their vocation, it needs to be interpreted with care. What we can learn from history, surely, is judgment: some inkling of how institutions operate, some notions about human nature, some feel for political imperatives. Above all, we should learn that events very seldom turn out precisely as expected. With these broad, tentative exceptions, history can neither predict nor prescribe. To imagine otherwise is to swallow the fallacy guded by Philip Guedalla: "History repeats itself: historians repeat each other."

Well, perhaps they used to. I know one biography, of a medieval statesman, which borrows large unacknowledged chunks from another. Today, however, and in the past among reputable scholars, the normal impulse is to rebut, not repeat. Historiography has yet to secrete the concentration of venom distilled in English faculties: but the fangs are there, ready for use. They're bared most notably when specialists raise their eyes from manuscript or microfilm to see amateurs making money (or TV series) with romantic misconceptions which will plague yet another generation of student essays, only quite lately purged of ill-digested Stubbs, Tawney, Toynbee, Trevelyan, or Marx.

Yet specialists face a dilemma. Students—and the general public—want to read a story. History, to them, is "what happened", and they want to see it unfold. Narrative, as practised by the classical English historians, good and bad, is what the layman is looking for; and if specialists won't supply it, he'll go to a retailer who will. The merchandise may be shoddy, but it sells—and it lasts. Can the specialist conscientiously compete?

THE DILEMMA'S MOST ACUTE in medieval studies. Here, evidence is sparse and specialised; and much research, as I know from personal experience, involves very humble tasks: tracking down codices in distant libraries, deciphering difficult script, analysing vocabulary, sentence-structure, and stylistic habits—all to establish putative authorship of several hundred Papal Bulls, as a mere preliminary to piecing together a scanty biography of one 11th-century Cardinal, a neat subject for a Ph.D. thesis, but one tiny element in any attempt at a history of the medieval Church, let alone a history of the Middle Ages. Small wonder that many general histories nowadays are collaborative ventures, the product of what Steven Runciman once called "the massed typewriters of the USA." Lone British scholars still tend to revere such masters as F. W. Maitland. As G. R. Elton reminds us in his pertinent monograph, now paperbacked,² "analysis, not narrative, constituted Maitland's organizing principle for the writing of history"; and this is hardly the layman's first choice.

² F. W. Maitland. By G. R. ELTON. Weidenfeld & Nicolson, £4.95.

³ *The Domesday Inheritance*. By JACK RAVENSDALE. With photographs by RICHARD MUIR. Souvenir Press, £15.95.

⁴ *The Knight, the Lady and the Priest: The Making of Modern Marriage in Medieval France*. By GEORGES DUBY. Translated by BARBARA BRAY. Allen Lane, £14.95.

⁵ *Giovanni and Lusanna: Love and Marriage in Renaissance Florence*. By GENE BRUCKER. Weidenfeld & Nicolson, £9.95.

Still, even in medieval studies, original work can be made attractive, as the success of *Montaillou* has shown. A recent example in English is *The Domesday Inheritance*, by Jack Ravensdale, with fine sharp photographs by Richard Muir.³ The title of Dr Ravensdale's book is admittedly a touch misleading: could it have been chosen by his publisher with an eye on the 900th anniversary? What his book contains is a history of Landbeach village, in the Fens just north of Cambridge. Aerial photography there has revealed Iron Age settlement, probably pre-Roman; and well-preserved archives, many kept by Corpus Christi College, make it possible to trace village history in surprising detail, virtually to the present day. There's little scandal of the *Montaillou* type, although in the 14th century John Frere the reeve was accused of keeping "a certain foreign woman" in the lord's bakehouse, at the lord's expense. What there is in abundance is the sense of continuity—of the past like a palimpsest underlying the present, contributing to its enduring shape.

S CANDAL, OF COURSE, is a tried and true attraction; and so is love. Georges Duby's *Le Chevalier, la Femme et le Prêtre* became a best-seller when it appeared in France five years ago: perhaps its purchasers expected another *Montaillou*. In some respects they got it—sidelights on fornication, bestiality, homosexuality, incest, and rape. But the essence of Professor Duby's work is that described in the subtitle to his English translation, deftly done by Barbara Bray: "the making of modern marriage in medieval France."⁴ This, then, is no anecdote, no town or village archive. Instead, it traces the development of marriage as a sacrament rather than a mere contract or means of control; the evolution of courtly love; the clearer definition of forbidden unions; the more equal relationship gradually evolved. Using Papal letters, hagiographies, religious drama, genealogical histories, and other contemporary sources as well as much secondary material, Professor Duby constructs what seems a very convincing chain of argument, as authentic and vivid in its detail as the work of his better-known colleague, Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie.

Gene Brucker's book bears a similar subtitle—"Love and Marriage in Renaissance Florence"; but its main title, *Giovanni and Lusanna*,⁵ makes clear its focus on a particular case. In 1455 Lusanna, an artisan's daughter and widow of a clothmaker, sued Giovanni, a wealthy merchant, alleging that he was her husband and had bigamously married someone else. It was a bitter and complex case, which went on appeal to Rome; and Professor Brucker has used contemporary archives to tease out not only the courtroom detail, but also the social and economic constraints which made it a *cause célèbre*. As "microhistory", like the contemporary woodcuts that decorate the text, this book is a fine spyhole into a cramped and crowded city-state.

Some 170 years later, not far from Florence in the small town of Pescia, another scandal broke: a lesbian affair between an Abbess and one of her nuns. In *Immodest Acts*, Judith C. Brown, Associate Professor of History at Stanford

University, tells the story comprehensively, paying due attention to its broader implications.⁶ What prurience survives is in the records she quotes, the product of hothouse inhibitions and censorious peeping. Almost, one feels, the Abbess's real failing was to have seen visions and heard voices—experiences upsetting to late-Renaissance ecclesiastical bureaucrats of the male sex. Impeccably documented, coolly sympathetic, and crisply written, the book might serve as a long and learned footnote to the *Decameron*—although Boccaccio, as Professor Brown notes, never even hinted that such things went on.

THE UNEARTHING OF STORIES like these may seem characteristic of our age, still belatedly enjoying the removal of taboos, and very keenly concerned with sex. But sex, today, very often involves politics; and this is at least a subtext in each of the three books just mentioned. If 19th-century constitutional historians tended to look, with Tennyson, for freedom slowly broadening down from precedent to precedent, some present-day historians appear to be looking for something to deplore. Elitism, hierarchy, oppression: these are the themes that glitter wickedly in the seam they're mining, seeking perhaps the origins of radical protest, the strength of plebeian culture, or the making of the "working class." Implicit in their quest are egalitarian assumptions which are seldom those of the age they're studying; and what interests them most in the past, if not in life itself, would seem to be the structure of authority. Not food, or love, or sunshine; not aesthetic pleasure, not jokes or tragedy, not religion: only the (they would say) basic question of who gives the orders to whom.

Of course it's an important topic, greatly vexing in a period of rapid change. But history would be thin if that were its main preoccupation—like a book on sailing obsessed by the racing rules.

Michael D. Bristol's *Carnival and Theater*⁷ is too lively with quotation to be as dull as that: but his study of Renaissance high jinks is heavily slewed in the direction of Marx, Bakhtin, Durkheim, and Victor Turner, with dread chapter-headings like "Authority and the author function" or—no kidding—"The dialectic of laughter." The simple facts that carnival could mock those in power, assert community spirit, and recognise death as the great leveller, are here paraded as rare trophies, garlanded with jargon and badge-words like "collective", "ideology", and "ludic." But then the author is not an historian, but an associate professor of English.

David Starkey, by contrast, is a true historian and a sharp writer. His short study has a great subject—not simply an

over-mighty one, either. While delineating the well-known appearance and character of Henry VIII, he nevertheless sets him in the context of his court; and although crossing swords with G. R. Elton, his account is also in Elton's debt, notably but not only in respect of Thomas Cromwell. There's a slight eagerness in Dr Starkey's manner, especially in asides about Tudor Whitehall's affinities with the White House, about "most historians", or about "a handful of wimp humanists." This may put off readers who prefer composure. But *The Reign of Henry VIII*,⁸ with familiar and less familiar illustrations of impassive Tudor faces, is a useful primer which queries a number of legends, including the allegation that Henry suffered from syphilis.

Whitehall Palace, which Henry took over from Wolsey, was only one of the London buildings to be transformed into residences for men of rank. They had been invading the city since Edward IV's reign; but by the 17th century the tide had become a flood. Business as well as politics, however, accounted for London's expansion, as A. L. Beier and Roger Finlay point out in their introduction to *London 1500-1700*,⁹ in this respect updating N. G. Brett-James's 1935 classic, *The Growth of Stuart London*. Their book is a symposium rather than a single narrative: they and their contributors home in on selected topics which include suburban expansion, the plague, barber-surgeons, foreign trade, manufactures, food, social topography, and the 17th-century poor. As a pioneering work, then, this is patchy and hardly tailored to the layman's needs; but the reason is simply that more

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⁶ *Immodest Acts: The Life of a Lesbian Nun in Renaissance Italy*. By JUDITH C. BROWN. Oxford University Press, £12.50.

⁷ *Carnival and Theater: Plebeian Culture and the Structure of Authority in Renaissance England*. By MICHAEL D. BRISTOL. Methuen, £21.00.

⁸ *The Reign of Henry VIII: Personalities and Politics*. By DAVID STARKEY. George Philip, £5.95.

⁹ *London 1500-1700: The Making of the Metropolis*. Edited by A. L. BEIER and ROGER FINLAY. Longman, £7.50.

research is needed before a synthesis can be made. Still, interim reports have their uses and their fascination—not least in M. J. Power's meticulous maps of dwelling sizes at the time of the Restoration, or M. J. Kitch's cognate study of migration fifty years later.

A. L. Beier is also the author of another absorbing piece of social historiography, *Masterless Men*.¹⁰ This traces the development of vagrancy and the response to it in the late 16th and early 17th centuries—an echo of which may still linger, as G. M. Trevelyan suggested, in the nursery rhyme:

*Hark, hark,
The dogs do bark,
The beggars are coming to town.*

Not all the vagabonds were mendicants. The biggest single categories, the records show, were apprentices and servants, makers and sellers of cloth, and in later years soldiers and sailors. There were also numerous criminals; and even those who remained poor but honest led miserable, rackety, outlaw lives. Like motorcycle gangs, they terrified respectable citizens—to whose credit it is that after the Restoration, with economic recovery and better understanding of social problems, penal vagrancy laws began to be supplemented by settlement laws and a huge expansion of poor relief. A. L. Beier documents his story with scrupulous attention to original sources, and includes twelve statistical tables which must be the fruit of hours among the archives: but he keeps

his narrative buzzing along like an easy rider, and amply fulfils his claim to throw new light on "the values and preoccupations of an entire age."

J. P. Sommerville approaches part of the same value-system from a more traditional, less of a worm's-eye, point of view. *Politics and Ideology in England 1603-1640*¹¹ essentially examines what articulate people thought and wrote in the years preceding the Civil War: but if this sounds like a return to the orthodoxy of S. R. Gardiner in the 1880s, the impression is mistaken. Dr Sommerville takes full account of the research which qualifies the old simplistic version of the story, as well as of that which explodes economic, *marxisant* interpretations of the War. He recognises the role of factions, and the multiplicity of opinions expressed alongside those of, say, Hobbes and Locke. He proclaims—in the teeth of cynical materialism, but with evidence and experience to support him—that ideology, beliefs, and passionately held values do, after all, play a major role in politics. It's very refreshing, and it rings true to the tone of the time. The 17th century was to Britain what the 18th was to America: a prolonged and practical political seminar, where values were tested by shot and steel.

TO TURN TO THE 19TH CENTURY feels like entering a different world. Different, that is, for the historian: now, instead of the paucity of medieval manuscripts, the challenge of Renaissance handwriting, or the still manageable wealth of the Public Record Office, he or she begins to confront the modern and contemporary nightmare—drowning in documentation. All the more praise, therefore, to Maxine Berg for managing, within the compass of a brief and handy volume in the Fontana *History of England*, to make a clear, readable, and original contribution to that endlessly studied subject, the (first) Industrial Revolution. *The Age of Manufactures*¹² is not, in fact, devoted solely or even mainly to the factory system. It includes and illuminates domestic industry and small artisan workshops, and shows that this "other Industrial Revolution", as Dr Berg calls it, "was created by women and children at least as much as it was by male artisans and factory workers." The book by no means prettifies their plight.

This, of course, is the other challenge facing the historian of the 19th century: to keep an even keel. Seas of pity, gusts of emotion, can endanger objectivity. Were all mill-owners grasping? Was paternalism necessarily despicable? Was every teacher a Gradgrind, every workman a Stephen Blackpool? It seems hardly likely: and while one swallow may not make a summer, or satisfy an *Oliver Twist*, it would be wrong to paint the century unrelievedly black. This, I'm afraid, is the impression left by quite a few scrupulous and sensible monographs. David J. V. Jones, for example, describing the

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¹⁰ *Masterless Men: The Vagrancy Problem in England 1560-1640*. By A. L. BEIER. Methuen, £19.95.

¹¹ *Politics and Ideology in England 1603-1640*. By J. P. SOMMERVILLE. Longman, £6.95.

¹² *The Age of Manufactures 1700-1820*. By MAXINE BERG. Fontana, £4.95.

Newport Insurrection of 1839 in *The Last Rising*.¹³ understandably reminds us that "in the 1930s Aneurin Bevan and hungry miners recalled the heroic struggles of those Chartists who had marched a century before." "This book", he adds, "shows why the rising deserved to be remembered by working people; for their downtrodden and unenfranchised forefathers of the industrial revolution it was 'the last chance . . . we should have', and they had been brave enough to take it."

¹³ *The Last Rising: The Newport Insurrection of 1839*. By DAVID J. V. JONES. Clarendon Press, Oxford, £12.50.

¹⁴ *Independent Women: Work and Community for Single Women 1850-1920*. By MARTHA VICINUS. Virago Press, £15, paper £6.95.

¹⁵ *Protest and Reform: The British Social Narrative by Women, 1827-1867*. By JOSEPH KESTNER. Methuen, £15.00.

An inspiring peroration: but surely more suitable to a political speech than to a work of careful scholarship, which this is. Equally, such pioneer works as Martha Vicinus's *Independent Women*¹⁴ (on single women between 1850 and 1920) and Joseph Kestner's *Protest and Reform*¹⁵ (on "the British Social Narrative by Women 1827-1867") are vitiated, for me, by the *parti pris* with which they begin. I happen to share their political views, as I think I share those of David Jones. But I can't help feeling that in both cases the politics have led to distortions. Dr Vicinus, I suspect, overdoes her heroines' heroism; Professor Kestner, I'm sure, overvalues his authors—including, I fear, Fanny Mayne (no relation so far as I know).

To invert the paraphrase of Voltaire, I agree with what you say, but I dispute the way and the place in which you say it. Or, to return to T. S. Eliot, it's with whispering ambitions that history can deceive.

Brinkmanship

The Old Prose of English Classical Scholarship—By PETER JONES



ENOUGH BIZARRE CLAIMS have been made on behalf of a classical education to last most of us several lifetimes. Here is my favourite, from a Dr Armstrong—quoted in Andrew Amos's *Four Lectures on the Advantages of a Classical Education as an Auxiliary to a Commercial Education* (1846):

*Read aloud resounding Homer's strain,
And wield the thunder of Demosthenes;
The chest so exercised improves its strength,
And quick vibrations through the bowels drive
The restless blood, which in inactive days
Would loiter else in unelastic tubes.*

This arresting recommendation should, I suppose, be welcomed by classicists, who need all the arguments they can muster nowadays, though I have not observed that my colleagues enjoy noticeably better circulation than, say, the average early Renaissance historian.

Perhaps we should if we read the stuff aloud more than we do. But if one were to look for one constant claim made by classicists for the value of their subject over the past 150 years, I should guess that up to the 1950s at any rate the intellectual and aesthetic training offered by prose and verse composition would rank high on the list. Consequently, it is somewhat surprising to read Charles Brink's contention

in *English Classical Scholarship*¹ that the advent of prose composition was responsible for the *demise* of English classical scholarship between 1825 and the 1860s. His argument, briefly, is as follows:

Prose composition first entered the classical curriculum in the early 19th century at Shrewsbury (Dr Samuel Butler may be said to have given it its place of high importance). But it required such laborious early discipline, rigorous drilling, and forcing of the powers of thought and construction that by the time the students reached Oxbridge they were played out; and even if they stayed the course, they would be trained yet further in the subject, since (such was its cachet) Oxbridge spent more and more time on this exercise in order to feed the schools and keep the cycle going. The price of this concentration was paid for in the coin of critical scholarship. Not till the publication of H. A. J. Munro's *Lucretius* in 1864 or A. E. Housman's first papers in 1882 was the tradition of critical scholarship, begun by Richard Bentley in 1691, restored.

It seems to me that there are some questions to ask about this theory. Since prose composition continued to be a staple diet long after 1860, Brink does not make clear enough what the crucial changes were around that time that defused its insidious influence. A. E. Housman saw great, if qualified, merit in it, and fine scholars like H. A. J. Munro and Sir Richard Jebb produced their own books of versions without noticeable damage to their critical faculties. In his autobiography, the great German scholar Wilamowitz says that he attached "incomparable value" to that sort of intellectual training. Again, translation from English into Latin, especially in the form of essay-writing, had been an arid and toilsome feature of education for hundreds of years before

¹ *English Classical Scholarship: Reflections on Bentley, Porson and Housman*. By C. O. BRINK. James Clarke & Co., £11.95.

Butler developed the technique of prose composition. Milton in his *Tractate* scorned the "preposterous exaction of forcing the empty wits of children to compose themes, verses and orations."

I cannot quite believe that prose composition imposed a qualitatively more radical discipline than what had gone before. It is certainly the case that for many scholars prose and verses offered a light relief. Alexander Shewan's *Lusus Homericus* (Blackwell, 1928), for example, is a marvellously witty collection of Homeric verses on topics such as grouse-shooting, golf and cricket ("[The wicket] fell to the ground and its bails clashed about it"), written by way of recreation, as he says, "in the intervals of more serious work." One wonders how many scholars there were who made it their life's work. One who did, evidently, was A. T. Barton, whose pupils published his translation of Shakespeare's sonnets into Latin (Riccardi Press, 1913) "to be a remembrance of his full and ripe scholarship."

But though I have my doubts about Brink's thesis, a further question immediately suggests itself: *why* prose composition? Brink's chapter on Victorian classical education implies an answer without ever stating it fully. I, however, shall turn to Macaulay.

ALL CLASSICISTS KNOW, to their shame and terror, the forbidding list of authors that Macaulay read in the original between December 1834 and 30 December 1835. For non-classicists, here it is, quoted from Macaulay's letter home of that date:

"... During the last thirteen months I have read Aeschylus twice; Sophocles twice; Euripides once; Pindar twice; Callimachus; Apollonius Rhodius; Quintus Calaber; Theocritus twice; Herodotus; Thucydides; almost all Xenophon's works; almost all Plato; Aristotle's Politics, and a good deal of Organon, besides dipping elsewhere in him; the whole of Plutarch's Lives; about half of Lucian; two or three books of Athenaeus; Plautus twice; Terence twice; Lucretius twice; Catullus; Tibullus; Propertius; Lucan; Statius; Silius Italicus; Livy; Velleius Paterculus; Sallust; Caesar; and lastly Cicero. I have,

indeed, a little of Cicero left; but I shall finish him in a few days. I am now deep in Aristophanes and Lucian. . . ."

To show that this reading was not mere page-turning, Macaulay's biographer, G. O. Trevelyan, goes on:

"That the enormous list of classical works recorded in the letter was not only read through, but read with care, is proved by the pencil marks, single, double, and treble, which meander down the margin of such passages as excited the admiration of the student; and by the remarks, literary, historical, and grammatical, with which the critic has interspersed every volume, and sometimes every page. In the case of a favourite writer, Macaulay frequently corrects the errors of the press, and even the punctuation, as minutely as if he were preparing the book for another edition."

Finally, it may be worth reminding readers that, at this time, Macaulay was engaged in planning, founding and constructing "in all its grades" the education of India, and was President of a Commission to enquire into the Jurisprudence and Jurisdiction of the whole Eastern Empire, in which position he drew up a full penal code in less than twelve months.

But if we ask what sense Macaulay made of his reading, we may be disappointed. Here is a passage from his essay on the Athenian orators, when he takes us back in imagination to Athens in the "time of its power and glory":

"A crowd is assembled round a portico. All are gazing with delight at the entablature; for Phidias is putting up the frieze. We turn into another street: a rhapsodist is reciting there: men, women, children are thronging round him: the tears are running down their cheeks: their eyes are fixed: their very breath is still: for he is telling how Priam fell at the feet of Achilles, and kissed those hands—the terrible, the murderous—which had slain so many of his sons. We enter the public place: there is a ring of youths, all leaning forward, with sparkling eyes, and gestures of expectation. Socrates is pitted against the famous atheist, from Ionia, and has just brought him to a contradiction in terms. But we are interrupted. The herald is crying, 'Room for the Prytanes.' The general assembly is to meet. The people are swarming in on every side. Proclamation is made, 'Who wishes to speak?' There is a shout, and a clapping of hands; Pericles is mounting the stand. Then for a play of Sophocles: and away to sup with Aspasia. I know of no modern university which has so excellent a system of education."

This is certainly big-screen stuff. All that is lacking is an invasion of Spartans led by Julius Caesar to capture the Christ-child and save the Roman Empire from the Vikings ("Gee, Marco Polo, if what you say is true. . . .") for all ancient life to be there.

It is gibberish. Phidias was a sculptor. Let him oversee the erection of a frieze by all means—but "put it up"? Rhapsodists were paid professionals and would no more strike up in the streets than Plácido Domingo would now. Socrates appears to be some sort of evangelist, though I

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can think of no Socratic dialogue where he engages in serious debate about whether the gods existed or not. And who is the atheist from Ionia? Diagoras was known as "the atheist", but he came from Melos. Besides, there was no such category of thinkers as "atheists" in 5th-century Athens. Heaven knows what the assembly is doing meeting on a day when there is (apparently) a drama festival on. If Macaulay went to sup alone with Aspasia, he could expect to receive a pretty thick ear from Pericles; and he seems to regard tragedies by Sophocles as entertainments regularly played in the evening. Just like Drury Lane, in fact. . . .

AND THAT IS PRECISELY the point. Even in the 18th century, as Richard Jenkyns has suggested, it was a conscious decision on the part of a poet to "go classical."² When he did so, he called attention to the fact, challenging his readers to spot the parallels. By the 19th century, the whole basis of classical education in England was being threatened. As R. M. Ogilvie argues in *Latin and Greek* (1964), questions were now beginning to be asked about whether classical training was adequate to prepare men for the conditions of industrial civilisation. Was there a significant educational fit between running a profitable cotton-mill and, say, penning some passable iambs on the theme of the Calydonian boar? The classicist's response, like Dr Armstrong's "poem", was to affirm that indeed there was.

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In other words, the 19th-century classicists justified their subject by attempting to show how congruent the worlds of contemporary Britain and classical Rome and Athens were. When there were embarrassments, they could be dealt with by deceit or simple denial. W. H. Thompson, Master of Trinity, says in his commentary on the *Phaedrus* (1868): "It seems impossible that Plato can seriously have entertained the paradox that the *paidon eros* [pederasty] was a necessary step to moral perfection." Benjamin Jowett, who disgusted A. E. Housman with his disregard for scholarly problems, argued in the second edition of his commentary on the *Symposium* that Plato valued such a relationship because it was "altogether separated from the bodily appetites." Into such an atmosphere of adulation of all things classical and of uncritical determination to see comparisons everywhere, the skill of prose composition fitted perfectly. The world of Burke was, after all, with only minor adjustments the world of Cicero and Demosthenes. If Brink is right to see a falling-off of critical scholarship between 1825 and 1860, I would see composition as a symptom, and the cause lying more with the prevailing attempts to justify the classics in such slavish and dishonest terms.

NEVERTHELESS, BRINK'S BOOK does raise important questions about the direction of classical scholarship. The problem with Brink's discussion is that his choice of exemplars—Richard Bentley, Richard Porson and A. E. Housman, fascinating as they are—suggests strongly that what Brink actually means is textual criticism. The other problem (quite apart from the fact that all three were pretty cantankerous and objectionable people by any standards) is that of two of them it could be argued that their interests became, as a result, unacceptably narrow. This does not prevent them being outstandingly brilliant in their field.

² Richard Jenkyns, *Omnibus* 5, p.14. This brilliant sixth-form classical magazine is published by JACT, 31-34 Gordon Square, London WC1H 0PY, and regularly contains well-illustrated articles by the most distinguished scholars over every area.

³ Quoted in F. M. Turner, *The Greek Heritage in Victorian Britain* (1981), p.10.

of course (Brink's subject is, after all, English classical scholarship). But is there really no life after textual criticism? One rather feels that for Porson and Housman there was not; or if there was, it was not worth living. Bentley, it is true, is a different case, and Brink explains with great clarity the importance of his achievements, particularly his famous demonstration that the so-called "Epistles of Phalaris" were fakes. The story is a good one, and worth the re-telling.

Phalaris was the tyrant of Agrigentum in the late 6th century BC. His "Epistles" became the centre of attention during the *cause célèbre* known as "the Battle of the Books." In 1692, Sir William Temple, a retired politician and dilettante, took up arms against Charles Perrault and others who espoused the cause of the Moderns, and instanced the "Epistles of Phalaris" as having "more Race, more Spirit, more Force of Wit and Genius, than any others I have seen either Ancient or Modern."

Such was the interest aroused that the Hon. Charles Boyle was asked to produce an edition. This appeared in 1695. Meanwhile, William Wootton, a friend of Bentley's, who had in 1694 published a book taking the middle line between Perrault and Temple, but who knew of Bentley's view that the "Epistles" were a complete forgery, asked Bentley to prove his thesis. This Bentley did in a "Dissertation" which he added to the second edition of Wootton's book, duly published in 1697.

The outstanding importance of the "Dissertation" lies in the sheer range of knowledge brought to bear upon the problem at hand. Brink intelligently groups the arguments as follows (the "Dissertation", written in a tremendous rush, does not argue by subject in this way): (a) historical anachronisms (e.g. Thericlean cups circulating more than a century before Thericles was born); (b) use of later quotations or clichés (Euripides being quoted 120 years before his time); (c) use of the term "tragedy" well before the literary genre had been established; (d) speech—the use of Attic dialect, especially late and artificial Attic, in place of what one would expect of Phalaris, i.e. Doric; (e) the unreality and artificiality of the whole; and (f) the unlikelihood that the "Epistles" should receive no mention till the 5th century AD—more than a thousand years after they had been composed.

The importance of Bentley's work is that for the first time the "Epistles" were seen in an historical light, and strictly historical criteria were brought to bear on the problem. Second, philology for Bentley was not restricted to texts: metre, numismatics, linguistic change, and political history were all brought equally to bear upon the problem. Here are the first glimmerings of *Altertumswissenschaft*, that noble German conception of the 19th century that the study of antiquity, by drawing its conclusions from the whole field of available historical evidence, should thus become truly scientific. Unhappily for English classical scholarship, Richard Porson, however brilliant an emender, never took up Bentley's torch, while Housman, who surely could have

done, made the conscious decision to restrict himself to problems which could be solved in as objective and scientific a manner as possible. That may be a failure of vision: whether it is culpable or not, is hardly for me to judge.

WHICH BRINGS US BACK to the problem Brink poses for us: whither classical scholarship? For Brink, the question really seems to be "Whither *philologia Bentleiana*?", and on his last page he makes plain his gloom at current literary trends. He does not mention it in so many words, but obviously what he means is whatever the current trend in ante-post-deconstructionism is. Since Brink lives in Cambridge, where questions of the meaning of the meaning of the meaning are bread-and-water to intense middle-aged dons, let me assure him that they are very wearisome to everyone else. We classicists are notoriously pragmatic. By their fruits ye shall know them. Nothing they have produced so far could by the most sulphurous leap of the imagination be classified as remotely resembling even a veg., let alone a fruit. (I am unfair. Walking-stick cabbages spring to mind.)

If by *philologia Bentleiana* Brink actually means textual criticism, Brink's successor at Cambridge, E. J. Kenney, expressed himself in pretty pessimistic terms in 1974: "... some of the most inadequate work. . . encountered (by me) over the last twenty years or so has been in the field of textual criticism and editing."⁴ But on the fructiferous principle enunciated above, the problem with textual criticism is that one yearns for it to make a *significant* difference. Of course it can do, but I wonder, for example, how many books and articles about Euripides should now be quietly Gaddafied as a result of James Diggle's brilliant new Oxford texts? Very few, is my guess. That, of course, does not mean that the editing of texts should stop. We are after the truth, are we not?

The problem about *philologia Bentleiana* is that the "Dissertation" was a one-off. The direction in which it pointed was not pursued, even by Bentley, who continued brilliantly to emend texts but not to *expound* them. It is as if, once the text is emended, there is nothing else to be done. But getting the text right is merely the start of the problem. That is why textual criticism is so important: it lays firm foundations. By the same token, it is why it is not enough. Foundations obviously affect a building's shape, but they do not build. *Pace* Brink, one puts down Housman's *Manilius* quite overwhelmed at one level, but for all that still asking, "Yes, but what is Manilius *on about*?"

Classicists are at heart exegetes: we like to find problems and solve them. But there is one problem which looms larger and larger in the late 20th century and will not go away: that is, should a scholar be making an ancient text accessible to people other than scholars? Brink says "no" ("education is one thing and high scholarship is another"). But if he takes that line, he is opening the door to people like Jowett: the responsibility for the accessibility of texts falls into the hands of the incompetent. Brink is wrong. It does take a very special sort of high scholar to bat successfully on both wickets, but they do exist; and those of us who love the classical languages can only pray that more may get into the team.

⁴ E. J. Kenney, *The Classical Text* (University of California Press, 1974), p.148.

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Startling, charming, stimulating, these letters convey very well the character of a writer, journalist, editor, and publisher whose novels and plays were never published or performed; who put his warmth and wit into correspondence and conversation; and who was murdered, senselessly, six years ago, aged forty-four.

On the Record: Surveillance, Computers and Privacy—The Inside Story. By DUNCAN CAMPBELL and STEVE CONNOR. Michael Joseph, £7.95.

The title and first author's name suggest alarmist sensationalism; but the data provided is interesting and, if accurate, strengthens the case for freedom of information. Privacy, as the authors admit, is less the problem than error and possible lies. Otherwise, who cares what's on file?

Helen Waddell: A Biography. By DAME FELICITAS CORRIGAN. Gollancz, £16.95.

Admiring, rather uncritical account of the author of *The Wandering Scholars*, *Peter Abelard*, and *The Desert Fathers*, and translator of *Mediaeval Latin Lyrics*. Predictably partisan on G. C. Coulton, unlikely to be popular with a nun from Stanbrook Abbey: revealing on domestic distractions and pain.

The Existential and its Exits: Literary and Philosophical Perspectives on the Works of Beckett, Ionesco, Genet & Pinter. By L. A. C. DOBREZ. The Athlone Press, £25.

Painstaking "perspective" by the Head of the English Department at the Australian National University, seeing imprisonment as the four authors' shared motif. Of their escape plans, he argues, Beckett's "succeeds (impossibly)"; Ionesco's fails; Genet's "succeeds (minimally)"; and Pinter's "avoids the alternatives of failure and success."

The State of America. By TREVOR FISHLOCK. John Murray, £10.95.

Slightly misleading title for a shrewd, lively, vivid, fact-packed survey by a London *Times* man, travelling North, South, East, and West, closer to John Gunther than to Anthony Hartley's diagnostic *A State of England*. Main diagnosis: hubris.

In the Vatican. By PETER HEBBLETHWAITE. Sidgwick & Jackson, £15.

Pleasantly written, sympathiser's account by a former Jesuit, biographer of Pope John XXIII. It includes a portrait of Pope John Paul II, a discussion of liberation theology, and proposals for less central control, but nothing on Roberto Calvi, except in the bibliography.

Choosing Elites. By ROBERT KLITGAARD. Basic Books, \$29.95, £21.95.

Are the brightest the best? Professor Klitgaard cautiously correlates university performance with later-life achievement, and

outlines how to quantify trade-offs between affirmative action (for minorities) and maintenance of standards.

Liberty Style: The Classic Years 1898-1910. By MERVYN LEVY. Weidenfeld & Nicolson, £18.

Lavishly illustrated and scholarly history of the style encouraged by Arthur Lasenby Liberty, founder of the eponymous emporium, and practised by Archibald Knox, C. F. A. Voysey, *et al.* Much of it looks like the work of romantically-inclined monks.

Hannah Arendt. By DERWENT MAY. Penguin, £2.95.

Brisk, user-friendly, and serviceable item in Penguin's "Lives of Modern Women", which includes also Madame Sun Yat-Sen and Colette, using reminiscences by friends and relations as well as printed sources for a rounded, not uncritical portrait.

1936 As Recorded by The Spectator. Introduced and edited by CHARLES MOORE and CHRISTOPHER HAWTREE. Michael Joseph, £14.95.

The fiftieth anniversary hardly makes 1936 "the single most important year between the wars" (the blurb's claim); but the magazine's vintage included Philip Guedalla, R. H. S. Crossman, Goronwy Rees, Basil Bunting, V. S. Pritchett, D. W. Brogan, Rose Macaulay, G. M. Trevelyan, Graham Greene, William Empson, A. J. Ayer, Evelyn Waugh, William Plomer, Elizabeth Bowen, and Anthony Blunt. Not bad.

Henry Moore: An Illustrated Biography. By WILLIAM PACKER, with photographs by GEMMA LEVINE. Weidenfeld & Nicolson, £12.95.

Useful but unsurprising narrative of Moore's career, rather discreet and dapper in the telling, redeemed by penetrating, unassuming pictures of the artist at work—intent, matter-of-fact, inward, deft, humorous, and masterly.

Pleasures of the Belle Epoque: Entertainment and Festivity in Turn-of-the-Century France. By CHARLES REARICK. Yale University Press, \$29.95, £19.95.

Sumptuously illustrated hymn to a stereotype—or so it would seem. In fact, Professor Rearick explains the bread-and-circuses intent in the new Republic's democratic festivals, and reveals the shadows hanging over the fun.

How the West Grew Rich: The Economic Transformation of the Industrial World. By NATHAN ROSENBERG and L. E. BIRDZELL. I. B. Tauris, £16.50.

Massive, lightweight survey from the Middle Ages to the present, based on secondary sources, arguing that economic development was due to the break-up of centralised political and religious control, setting small enterprises free. Not proven, I think.

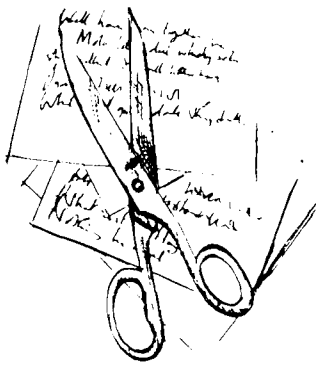
Private Opinions Public Polls. By LESLIE WATKINS and ROBERT M. WORCESTER. Thames and Hudson, £9.95.

Jazzy, teasing, but compulsively sampleable findings of opinion polls ranging from love ("What is the second thing American women notice when meeting a new man?") to war and peace ("Which side would win a nuclear battle between East and West?") Thirty-three % of Britons said: Neither).

A Stillness Heard Round the World: The End of the Great War: November 1918. By STANLEY WEINTRAUB. Allen & Unwin, £16.95.

Huge, vivid, well-documented panorama of slaughter ceasing, with a cast of hundreds, from Attlee to Alexander Woolcott. The War itself eclipses the impact of the Armistice—especially when the epilogue takes us to a beer cellar in Munich in 1923 and a marching song which begins: "*Die Fahne hoch*. . ."

R.M.



Considering the past record of the BBC in giving a free platform to terrorists,¹ I thought the outcry rather excessive. But it was a good illustration of the power of *censorship* as an epithet to intimidate media executives in the field of news and current affairs. In other fields—drama, for example—it has

Riding another hobbyhorse, the playwright Nigel Williams, writing for *Index on Censorship* (October 1984) about the rejection of his own TV work on race relations, lurched to this conclusion:

Now if anything is typical of our society, it is the proliferation of just such platforms in recent years, for the Working Class (this seems to be Williams's "majority"), for New Nations, and for Ethnic Minorities. In Britain it is hard to escape for long any of these entities and their spokesmen on any of the media (not to mention the theatre, public meetings, demonstrations, school classes, and even bookshops). Williams's assertion indicates the way in which "Censorship" is being squeezed, pulped, and dumped on to that linguistic compost-heap where words like "fascist" have rotted down into quasi-semantic muck, a sort of verbal dung for throwing at one's editorial or political enemies.

Most of the public seem to share these views more or less instinctively, and accordingly tolerate (sometimes even demand) a degree of censorship in the freest Western societies. It is pointless to mutter about "Establishment brainwashing" in this connection, since the public are not passive. They know well enough that a certain stability of the

social and political fabric is generally in their interest.² Being relatively open, often compassionate, and tolerant to a degree, Western society is felt to be flexible enough to withstand disruptive forces that would unsettle or tear the fabric of more rigid or frail systems, e.g. the Soviet Union or almost anywhere in the Third World. Through a long and painful evolution we have learned to allow and even encourage dissent, a playing fast-and-loose with taboos, and a species of yahoo journalism that would almost certainly call forth bloodshed elsewhere.

Naturally this tolerance is not absolute. It tends to break off sharply where particular interests or pressure groups feel their own image to be at risk. While condemning censorship in principle, British printing unions have blocked publication of news stories or editorials that put them (or other unions) in a bad light. During the Miners' Strike, for the same reason, pickets assaulted TV crews, damaging and even "expropriating" their equipment. Labour local councils have attempted to censor the local press by withholding official advertising and, like the Labour Party itself during the Wapping dispute, by barring access to blacklisted reporters or publications.³ The now defunct Greater London Council tried to ban certain artists from performing in metropolitan theatres and concert halls for political reasons. In the Yorkshire city of Bradford (ruled not by Labour, but by a coalition) the Education Committee threatened a local headmaster, Ray Honeyford, with the sack because he published articles dissenting from Bradford's "multi-cultural education" policy (even though he implemented the policy in practice). His offence was to anger Moslem bigots opportunistically supported by Marxist militants in the local community. Screaming demonstrations were organised outside Honeyford's school, and he was accused of "racism." The city council cravenly backed down before this pressure, and Honeyford was eventually forced to accept "early retirement."⁴

All these "modifications" of free speech for the media and others are less interesting than the actions of Britain's National Union of Journalists, which states its position thus:

"The NEC has always made known its total opposition to censorship, and reaffirms its belief that press freedom must be conditioned by responsibility and an acknowledgement by all journalists of the need not to allow press freedom to be abused to slander a section of the community."

This policy (from an NUJ pamphlet on the reporting of AIDS) means on the one hand a *de facto* censorship on the reporting of ethnic minorities; on the other, it demands

unlimited access to the media for IRA and other terrorists. The NUJ "Code of Conduct" has been used as an instrument of censorship in several cases, including one in which a *Sun* journalist was threatened with loss of his union card for condemning opposition to the Falklands War. In another egregious instance (described by Bernard Levin on 13 August 1985 in *The Times*), the NUJ censured a *culinary* journalist under the "Code of Conduct" for referring to "fawning Italians or Indians, surly Greeks, or inscrutable Chinese." This was supposed to "encourage discrimination." In all such incidents, the Left-wing censorship works not only through direct suppression of material but through the menace of destroying the livelihood of those who publish material which is disliked by NUJ militants. As Levin pointed out, the loss of a union card can automatically unemploy any journalist who is working in a closed shop.

The standard defence of such censorship is that it "helps to avoid racial tension." But there was no hint of social justification for the most flagrant case in recent years of media censorship *by the media*. This took place purely in order to protect the interests of journalists and their employers, letting all that stuff about "press freedom" go hang. In the years before and during the Israeli siege of Beirut in 1982, journalists from major Western outlets in Beirut were murdered, including correspondents of *Le Monde* and the American TV network ABC.

The PLO (helped by the Syrian secret service) threatened others with death and imprisoned some of them. These included representatives of the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, *Newsweek*, and *Associated Press*. This was done to impress journalists with the "Arab" point of view; and lo! the tenor of reporting during this period was overwhelmingly pro-Arab. For years no complaint nor even a hint of the intimidation appeared in any of the above outlets. (There were complaints about censorship, but only the Israelis were accused of it.) When this collective instance of media cowardice finally came to light in an article (*Commentary*, January 1983) by Kenneth Timmerman, I questioned him about it, and he proved to be pro-Palestinian in sympathy, carrying no brief at all for the Israelis. As recently as the second week in May, NBC Television accepted a form of censorship from an Arab terrorist, Abul Abbas (the master-mind of the *Achille Lauro* hijack), concealing his whereabouts in exchange for an interview.

GIVEN THE EXTRAORDINARY blend of arrogance, moral confusion, and hypocrisy with which so many in the journalistic profession treat their audience, it is not surprising that the media have begun to attract a seriously harsh type of scrutiny, mostly since the Viet Nam War. There was a time (it seems long ago now) when the shortcomings and sins of journalists were more or less taken for granted. Though newspapers could stimulate mob emotions, as they did before the Spanish-American War or with atrocity stories during World War I, a great deal of reporting was discounted to some degree, especially among the well-informed. It provoked satires on Fleet Street like Evelyn Waugh's *Scoop*,

² This applies even in repressive systems like the USSR and China, which have more popular support than hostile commentators or defectors in the West would have us believe. Obvious exceptions are Poland and other East European countries, where the régime is perceived as (and is) a "satellite" of the Soviet Union.

³ The need for publicity during a Parliamentary by-election forced the embarrassed *ad hoc* dropping of this policy by Labour.

⁴ See Max Beloff, "Unresolved Questions", in *ENCOUNTER* (May 1986).

or Broadway plays like *The Front Page*. It was the subject of jokes (like the one about the reporter who cabled his editor from the depths of a revolution: IMPOSSIBLE TO EXAGGERATE GRAVITY OF SITUATION STOP BUT I SHALL TRY). Yet if some of the present attacks on the media are taken at face value, they would seem to suggest that there was a sometime golden age in which all journalists played their Fourth Estate role with impeccable honesty, using none of the dreadful tricks they get up to now.

In fact the commonest types of journalistic chiselling date from the founding of modern journalism. The Tory hack and satirist Jonathan Swift, using his *Examiner* to hound the Whig Duke of Marlborough out of public life, foreshadowed by more than two centuries the media treatment of Richard Nixon over Watergate, or the attempts at repeating such a coup in Britain, with attacks against Mrs Thatcher over her son's connection with Middle East contracts, then over the sinking of Argentina's *Belgrano*, and lately over the trivial affair of the Westland Helicopter Company, and her permission for use of American bases in Britain to attack Libya. Now as in Swift's time, partisan hostility was cloaked in sanctimonious rhetoric and sarcastic digs in the style of *Private Eye*. In the 18th century Samuel Johnson published fictional accounts of Parliamentary speeches, in the manner of 20th-century cozeners like Janet Cooke of the *Washington Post* with her concocted story of a black child junkie; or Michael Daly, counterfeiting truth in the *New York Daily News* about a fictitious British soldier in Ulster; or, in London, *The Sun's* fabrication of an interview with a Falklands war-widow.⁵

Before the turn of the century yellow-journalistic lying was routine. In the 1920s newspapers were illustrated with "cosmographs"—faked photographs, sometimes showing an event which had not yet taken place.⁶ The television era has seen the emergence of more subtle forms of chicanery: among others, the use of phoney or selective "evidence" on camera to make a partisan point; or the "ambush interview", surprising and prodding a subject into statements which suit the reporter's prosecutory intention but violate the right to avoid self-incrimination; or the actual collusion of reporter and cameraman in setting up an ugly or sensational event (like the famous "zippo" incident in Viet Nam) with or without political *arrière-pensée*.⁷ Whatever recent abuses

have done to social standards of common decency, they have not clashed with long-established journalistic practice. Judging purely from historical facts, they have always been fairly typical of the profession.⁸

Commenting in 1963 on the abominable press treatment of a Government Minister during the Vassall spy scandal, Rebecca West wrote:

"Ever since newspapers were invented in the seventeenth century, they have tended to become mischievous, dishonest, and dirty, for the reason that they are written by the sons of man to be read by the sons of man, and mischievousness, dishonesty, and love of dirt are among the most persistent of human characteristics. . . ."

This also applies to the other media, but it is hardly the whole story. Journalists have provided many a good service to our democratic system, operating at their best as a kind of countervailing force against those who, even in a democracy, are prone to abuse public office, corrupt justice, cheat the customer, and generally do the little man down. Less dramatically, the press has been a conduit for information (*The Federalist Papers* are the classic example of this) which an electorate might, or might not, use to educate its choice. But this particular service is and always has been equivocal; journalists have never been immune from the temptation, that of their employers or their own, to bend their product and make one side or the other look good or bad.

THE JOURNALIST'S most vaunted role has been that of "champion for the underdog", working for the proverbial John Q. Citizen who has nowhere else to turn. Tocqueville remarked on the importance of this, and it is one aspect of journalism in which the self-serving image and the facts have often coincided. Now and again this role has become a bit skewed, as in the part played by the press in making folk heroes of notorious criminals in the 1920s and '30s;⁹ or in the media rush to stick up for "poor little Nicaragua" today, and lionise the Soviet-backed African National Congress in South Africa; or in the generous provision of "understanding" (i.e. excuses) for terrorist cabals in the Middle East and Europe, most disgracefully in Northern Ireland.

⁵ Johnson differed from his modern successors in this respect: when he discovered that his fiction was taken as fact, he stopped writing it—out of respect for the truth, not because he was exposed as a liar.

⁶ See Tom Goldstein, *The News At Any Cost* (1985, p. 209), on how "cosmographs" of Rudolph Valentino's funeral appeared in copies of the *New York Graphic* which were sold to mourners waiting for it to happen. (Were the mourners upset by this?) The book is a rich account of such journalistic jiggery-pokery.

⁷ After the Reagan-Mondale debates, Britain's *Channel 4 News* employed a medical amateur who stated solemnly that Reagan's syntax showed the onset of senility. In January 1986 the same show re-broadcast a CBS *60 Minutes* item in which Morley Safer gave cosy treatment to a lecturer and his cooked-up montage of film-and-TV clips suggesting that Reagan, because he quotes film lines in his speeches, cannot distinguish between Hollywood fantasy and reality. Safer, who has fiercely denied that the "zippo" incident in Viet Nam was "set up", did not hesitate on this occasion to help set

up the President of the United States. (On the "zippo" incident, see Robert S. Elegant, "How to Lose a War", in *ENCOUNTER*, August 1981.)

⁸ It has been claimed—see Goldstein's book, and Geoffrey Robertson, *People Against the Press* (1983)—that journalism is "not a profession but an occupation."

Webster's Dictionary says that a profession is "a vocation or occupation requiring advanced training in some liberal art or science, and usually involving mental rather than manual work, as in . . . writing." That "profession-occupation" cavil is nothing more than an attempt to place journalism above or outside the social obligations which apply to other professions. Goldstein and Robertson are playing with words, badly. Journalism is a profession.

⁹ This sometimes happens today, with television playing an important part. Cf. Jacques Mesrine in France; Ronald Biggs in Britain; and, of course the spectacular example of Bobby Sands in Ulster and his "hero status" in the United States.

On balance, the political advantages of "press" freedom have until recently far outweighed the harm done by those who exploit and abuse it. If the freedom to do good was not previously threatened by the license to do otherwise, it was because the political hubris of journalists (not always of expansive employers like Hearst, Northcliffe, etc.) was generally held within reasonable bounds. This was easier when the audience for a given newspaper was more restricted, and the mass media were not as pervasive as they are now.¹⁰ In the 1930s, radio was used politically as a mass medium, both by dictators and by figures like Roosevelt with his "fireside chats." However, it was not manipulated by journalists and editors in anything like the way that television is today. Journalistic arrogance showed itself generally in the aggressive and mendacious style of the yellow press, and in a contempt for due process of law which with cases like the kidnapping of the Lindbergh baby could lead to "press lynching." It might also create the myth of a rigged trial for a supposedly innocent Sacco and Vanzetti.¹¹ But the press, and then radio and television, were a positive (if flawed) influence in sustaining social cohesion, exposing commercial malfeasance, and keeping elected politicians more honest than they might have been without media attention. Journalists also deliberately upheld the defence of democratic values, even in wartime.

During the last two decades or so this latter activity has gone through a sort of eversion, beginning in the "hippie" era and showing itself fully during the Viet Nam War. Journalists began to portray that conflict not as one between systems and contrasting values, but between "the Government" (of the US) and some little people who were suffering because America was doing ugly and immoral things. For the first time journalists consciously used their underdoggy to help isolate the government of a democratic nation from a significant section of its own people and to destroy an electoral mandate.

The most familiar righteous charge by American journalists against their government was that it lied while fighting the Viet Nam War. So it did; lying has been a normal, probably

an indispensable tool in every war fought by the United States (not to mention all other nations). It was used, for example, in World War II with general journalistic connivance. But that a profession whose *peacetime* record of lies has been historically so appalling should wax sanctimonious about lying in a life-death struggle almost passes belief. Furthermore this belated espousal of "truth" was selective; it was not applied to the North Vietnamese, nor was the scepticism with which so many journalists treated the American Government. The double standard was only one symptom of a journalistic hubris which reached epic proportions during the Viet Nam War. As one well-known journalist put it:

"... We have had the arrogance to believe that there was nothing in the tide of human affairs that journalism could not select, analyse, and explain; no event, no matter its magnitude or complexity, that could not successfully be subjected to the journalistic process."¹²

The arrogance was more despicable in that the "process" had always included a degree of fabrication, and did so during the Viet Nam War, for the usual purpose: to make a "good story" or, more honestly, to serve the interests of journalists and their employers in a highly competitive situation. Even where journalists stuck to what they had actually seen, there existed a form of lying by selection, since—later in the war when such coverage seriously affected public and governmental morale—so much of it was shaped to accord with an *a priori* hostility to the US government and to America's part in the war.¹³

THERE ARE SOME who still deny this in the face of plain evidence. Journalistic Tarquins like Morley Safer of CBS typically condemn critics as being "like Nazis" or "like Communists." This emetic nonsense and some other journalistic sins must, I suppose, be tolerated in a democratic system if the value of free media is to be preserved. However, the media in Viet Nam were not operating within the confines of a democracy; they were working in the context of the world, which is not a democratic society. In the arena of global power-politics we are up against this paradox: democratic values invoked to justify what is in effect aid-and-comfort to violently anti-democratic forces. I am not discussing some abstract debate, but a physical conflict involving bloodshed, in which victory for the "other side" brought about the horrors of the Boat People, the "re-education camps", and others. Today the same paradoxical approach is visible in coverage of the Sandinista Marxist-Leninist junta in Central America and its threat to the region.

Certainly the very frailty of democracy's toe-hold in the world makes the preservation of our relatively uncensored media that much more important. But the equation of an uncensored media with democracy would be more convincing if it were not undermined by the record of self-censorship I have described above—remembering, I say again, that it did not happen in defence of anything more ideal than the interests of journalists and their employers. In the last analysis, journalists (just like politicians and other interest-

¹⁰ Occasionally the press did have a "mass medium" impact. Horace Greeley's "Go West, young man, and grow up with the country" did; and so did the press outburst over the sinking of the USS *Maine* at Havana in 1898.

¹¹ See David Felix, *Protest: Sacco-Vanzetti and the Intellectuals* (1965), which dissects the myth of their innocence. More recent research has confirmed his conclusion of their guilt, with Sacco as the man who pulled the trigger in the murder.

¹² Philip Knightley, "The Role of Journalists in Viet Nam" in *Viet Nam Reconsidered* (ed. Harrison Salisbury, 1984).

¹³ See Robert Elegant, "How to Lose a War", and Philip Knightley, *The First Casualty: From the Crimea to Vietnam: The War Correspondent as Hero, Propagandist, and Myth-Maker*. Both sources give examples of what I am talking about. Knightley admits that "... correspondents, or, more fairly, their editors, do have something to answer for in their selection of news in Viet Nam." He lets journalists off rather easily. For a fictional "report" of the 1944 D-Day in the style of much Viet Nam reporting, see R. James Wolsey's witty "Scoop: Eisenhower's Folly", in *ENCOUNTER*, September-October 1984. It concludes with a sneering reference to a GI's remark that "We're here to free Europe."

groups) have placed their own concerns before the high-minded commitment to a "free press."¹⁴

IN BRITAIN IT HAS BECOME almost fashionable to demand some sort of control for the media. It is not the world-affairs paradox just referred to which has provoked this, but a number of domestic irritations: cheque-book journalism which pays high prices to criminals or their families for trivial but sensational "inside stories"; the invasion of privacy and *paparazzi*-like hounding of those who attract public attention; the sporadic invention of quotes or even whole stories in a *British* context; carelessness with accuracy; and the irresponsible use of innuendo and selectivity. Trade unions and politicians of both Left and Right complain bitterly of "unfairness", by which they usually mean refusal to report the news from their point of view. Ethnic minorities insist on (and usually get) "special" treatment. Proprietors or "press barons" are singled out for execration by those inside as well as outside the profession. Even impeccably progressive journalists like Harold Evans think "something" should be done to restrain their independence.

Well-meaning figures like Lord Scarman may suggest tactfully that editors and reporters should "consider the effects" of what they are doing. This seems to skate over the fact that they do consider them. The real argument is over what the effects ought to be. Lord Scarman, or Tony Benn and Arthur Scargill, or the Conservative Party Chairman, or the Chief Executive of the Distillers Corporation, might see one effect as desirable; the journalist may intend quite another, and praise or damn and publish accordingly.

¹⁴ *The Observer* of London tamely submitted to trade-union censorship of an article by Bernard Levin in their 4 May issue. The National Union of Journalists' Father of the Chapel on the paper approved this decision "in the interests of publication." In a *Spectator* article (8 May), Paul Johnson noted that *The Observer*, after initial resistance, was also bending under pressure from its owner-company, Lorrho. With a depressing "everybody does it" defence published the following week, Donald Treford avoided the point: *The Observer* cultivates an image of fierce commitment to press—i.e. editorial—freedom. Treford's reply did more damage to this image than Johnson's indictment.

See also Tom Goldstein's book (Ch. 12, "Thin Skins: When Journalists Become The Story"), with TV-news star Dan Rather saying "fuck you" to a reporter trying to interview him. Rather, whose annual salary is in the millions, was reported in *Newsday* (27 January 1986) as trying to take virtual control of CBS News by placing "people he can trust in key roles" for his own purposes, i.e. "to become sole arbiter of CBS news standards, and to be named CBS's chief spokesman on major public policy issues."

¹⁵ On this point see my previous article in this series, "The News Managers", ENCOUNTER, June.

¹⁶ It is ironic that one of the most vilified "barons" in the media business, Rupert Murdoch, has helped to lower the cost of national newspaper publication by breaking restrictive practices and facing down the NGA and Sogat 82, thus removing a real brake on press freedom and creating a real hope for greater variety and scope in Britain's national newspapers. If he had lost his battle with these greedy, disruptive unions, their tyrannical grip on publication would have ensured that Fleet Street ownership would have had to remain the exclusive privilege (if one can call it that) of large corporations and multi-millionaires.

One comprehensive plan for controlling the effects by statute was published in 1983 by barrister-journalist Geoffrey Robertson, who writes for *The Guardian* on legal affairs and has chaired TV discussions on the problems of reporting terrorism. His book *People Against the Press* expresses sympathies which lie somewhere to the Left-of-Centre. He says that he is against censorship, and he expresses a fear that "press monopolies" will prevent "the publication of facts and opinions without which a democratic electorate cannot make responsible judgments."¹⁵ By monopolies he means the corporations or the very rich who are able to afford the expensive luxury of newspaper ownership with its attendant risks. He does not say why they should always be preventing such publication, or why they should be invariably hostile to a responsible electorate. And he is curiously undisturbed about trade unions, which have not only censored newspapers, but have raised the cost of Fleet Street ownership until only the very big and very rich corporations can afford it.¹⁶

Like so many who complain about the media, Mr Robertson lists the abuses named above and damns them with great vigour. Then he changes his mind, sort of. . . . It seems to him that "chequebook journalism", invasion of privacy, and even violation of due process and breaking the law are all acceptable if the "aim" is to provide the public "with accurate information on matters of public interest." He does not discuss or even moot any distinction between the public interest and idle curiosity, or what journalists and editors might think makes an exciting story. One is driven to the conclusion (as one usually is when journalists use the term "public interest") that this means whatever a journalist or editor arbitrarily decides it means.

THE PROPOSALS FOR CURBING abuse are amusing. To solve the "*paparazzi*" problem, Robertson means to confiscate the copyright in all "news-worthy" photographs and put them into the public domain. He gives no clue to the criteria for "news-worthy", which is awkward for the civil servant who would have to decide what *is*, after monitoring every picture submitted to every editor in the British Isles. Robertson gives no reason why film or video tape should not be included too, since TV reporting can be dreadfully annoying and intrusive. He seems oblivious to the exigencies of foreign markets where copyright would still exist, and to the possibility that a premium on "scoops" in no-copyright situations would actually make photographers more aggressive and unscrupulous.

To deal with "unfairness" or "inaccuracy" there would be an Ombudsman with power to confiscate unlimited newspaper space for the right to reply. Any challenge to his judgment would open editor, journalist, and publication to action under libel laws specially tailored for this purpose. Where a complainant *alleges* "malicious" inaccuracy the media would be subject to such litigation, *plus* the attentions of the Ombudsman, who would have power to impose an award for "expenses", funded by a compulsory levy on the press. The enormous scope for political abuse of this system escapes Mr Robertson entirely.

There is a precedent for the imposition of controls on

"monopolies." It happened under the Socialist government of France, and the result was the extension of monopolies. But British reformers, as always, think Britain is different. Some have called for statutory limits on the area of distribution or circulation of any single publication—presumably to be quantified as "fair" or "reasonable" by a civil-servant commissar, or the oxymoronic "Campaign for Press Freedom", or perhaps by Mr Harold Evans.

The same end could, of course, be achieved by restriction on investment or the supply of paper. Thus, competition would be "fair" or "socially just" according to the same arbitrary criteria. Under the political direction of reigning Ministry officials, there would be greater or lesser openings in the domestic market for new publishing enterprises (if anyone could afford them). Since any government imposing such measures would be likely to increase trade-union power, the

The Rehabilitated Man



A FEW MONTHS AGO the news of my death circulated in Budapest in the intellectual quarters where, even after half-a-century of involuntary absence, I do not appear to be completely forgotten. Three days later the news was denied. It seems that what had given rise to the announcement of my death, the source of the exaggeration, was the appearance of a book, based on a doctoral thesis, about the writings of my youth (a few novels, some criticism, a number of essays on the history of 18th- and 19th-century literature and aesthetic theory). This Hungarian book discreetly restored to me the rank which I like to think I held "dans l'entre-deux-guerres" and until 1948 in the literary life of my native country. Peter Agardi, the author of the book, is a young historian and associated with the Party's Central Committee, and I had never heard of him before; but he had taken the trouble to read through my old books and articles and to refute point by point the old ideological slanders which were aimed at me for years under the instigation of the intellectual dictators in the days of Stalin, whose favourite epithets were "renegade . . . class traitor . . . social democrat . . . opportunist." Agardi even has the nerve to have me come off best in the aesthetic-political polemics that once brought me up against the Muscovite Lukács, so well described by Thomas Mann under the name of "Naphta" in his masterful novel *"The Magic Mountain."*

SO OUT OF THE BLUE, to the surprise of my friends in Hungary and abroad, despite (or because of) my exile, I found myself suddenly in the state of grace of a Rehabilitated Man. The ban on speaking my name, on quoting me, and even publishing me, had been lifted. Now this is a quite unprecedented event in Hungary—for it must surely be the first time, at least to my knowledge, that an opponent and an exile has been rehabilitated in his own lifetime without having performed his *mea culpa*.

I HAD TO WONDER what need was there to contravene the post-Stalin rules in my case and not wait what few years I have left before pronouncing the formal posthumous rehabilitation. Do I owe this piece of good fortune solely to chance? To, possibly, the accident that my works, condemned to non-existence, should have been rediscovered in the censor's secret back-room? To the courage and honesty of one of those keen historians who come forward to resurrect the historical past? Still, one has to bear in mind that censorship in Communist Hungary is still a highly central-

ised process, and that Peter Agardi could scarcely have published his thesis without the consent of the highest political and cultural authorities. So could it be that, wittingly or unwittingly, and despite my consistent refusal of all the kind official invitations, I had somehow, somewhere, made some conciliatory gesture towards the régime? One knows that the régime's major cultural concern has been to "gather in the talents" (so pointlessly disregarded for some fifty years) by staging the most solemn welcomes for artists such as Vasarely, Székely and Kepes; Nobel-Prize winners such as Szentgyörgyi; musicians like Sebök and Sir George Solti, and economists such as Lord (Nicolas) Kaldor—notably those who, not unlike myself, chose to become integrated into the culture of their adoptive country and did not involve themselves in the more familiar kind of émigré activities.

NO DOUBT ABOUT IT, this new policy is intended above all to rescue the Communist establishment (and the dwindling number of intellectuals who still belong to it) from their state of isolation. It seeks to restore continuity with the progressive or avant-gardist or socialistic or liberal traditions of the pre-War era. (Hence the quasi-rehabilitation of intellectuals and scholars like Oszkar Jaszi and Istvan Bibó, and of the writer and painter Kassak.) The régime needs the cultural and historical legitimation which it does not possess and cannot invent. I suspect that that is the principal reason why several of my essays (which appeared at the time in the Social Democratic Party's theoretical review) have lately been republished. Now they have had the Academy ask me for a contribution to, of all things, the *Festschrift* planned for the Lukács centenary.¹ I have even had a TV camera-crew filming me for some 17 hours in Paris (but when will they ever screen it?). I suppose it's also all connected with the pilgrimage of young people who come to visit me from all over Hungary, as if I were some historic monument or a museum skeleton (one of the rare survivors of a pre-War generation of a species of antitotalitarian Left). Am I flattered? Certainly; but saddened too. How can I forget that my last books in Hungarian appeared some forty years ago and that many of my friends and those who are close to my own ideas and ideals are still being persecuted in Hungary? Will I ever really feel "rehabilitated"? And isn't it they who, in all justice, should be seeking forgiveness and rehabilitation?

ONE WAS FORCED to choose freedom, and one went on to live with it, work for it. As I write now for a West European public, I confess that a true and proper rehabilitation will only really come for me when communication with an East European public is equally open and free and uncensored.

François Fejtő

¹ I wrote an essay, forwarded it; but it was considered "too severe", and was rejected. It has since been published in France and in Italy.

consequent expense would hardly encourage prospective entrepreneurs. If the number of newspapers shrank through lack of investment, the Government could force a levy, say on all enterprise in the private sector (if any were left). Or perhaps the taxpayer could be compelled to finance one or two newspapers called, say, *Truth* and/or *The People's Observer*.¹⁷ A certain variety of views would be ensured, by force if necessary, and the electorate would receive all the information that civil-servant-journalists felt was needed for enlightened democratic choice.

PEOPLE LIKE Mr Robertson and his fellow would-be reformers are not likely to have their way in Britain, and certainly will not in the USA, where the media are protected from formal controls by the Constitution's First Amendment. But that is no ground for smugness about our free media in either country. Reasons have been found in Britain for suppressing some types of advertising, and for the local censorship of books which pressure groups or ideologically inclined officials feel to be tainted with "sexism" or "racism." The same thing has happened in the USA, not legally but administratively at local level, on religious, ethnic, and even gender grounds. These are salutary reminders of what Alexander Hamilton wrote in *The Federalist Papers* (No. 84):

"What is the liberty of the press? Who can give it any definition which would not leave the widest latitude for evasion? I hold it to be impracticable: and from this I infer that its security, whatever fine declarations may be inserted in any constitution respecting it, must altogether depend on public opinion, and on the general spirit of the people and of the government."

I am suggesting that in setting themselves above and beyond the rest of society, and behaving in the face of complaints like so many medieval popes,¹⁸ journalists have done more than offend a few special-interest groups. They have irritated (and

sometimes infuriated) the public, whose tolerance is the fundamental guarantee of media freedom in our democracy. Public anger has been met by too many journalists and media executives with insolence, contempt and a frequent indifference to absolutely minimal standards of discretion and public decency. Whatever the First Amendment says, such behaviour in the United States may, in time, sap the credibility of journalists (not exactly 100% now), through fatiguing the metal of public confidence and tolerance.

This is no imaginary threat to the proper function of the media in our democratic process. In Britain a refusal to respect public opinion, while attempting to exploit, whip, and otherwise manipulate it, while catering to the lowest common denominator of vulgar nosiness, has led to the current and increasing pressure for the imposition of formal restraint. Once imposed, this will not be easy to shed; and it will further erode an already damaged credibility. "Letters to the Editor", a toothless Press Council (held in open contempt by some newspapers and journalists), and Television's self-criticism (e.g. Channel 4's *Right to Reply* and *What the Papers Say*) have not helped much; nor has scattered and usually rather anodyne press comment on media performance. All these provide some entertainment and a "safety valve" for a very few, but have little or no influence on the work of journalists. In the United States, criticism like John O'Sullivan's "Presswatch" in *The American Spectator* or Reed Irvine's monthly bulletin (*Accuracy in Media*) records how atrociously the media can behave, but has not altered this behaviour. No more has the American system of newspaper "Ombudsmen", who are, after all, paid by the newspapers they watch.

THE SINS OF OUR MEDIA are unlikely to be redeemed by official measures, because the freedom of public discourse to render good service to our democratic system, and the license to foul society and spit in the public's face, cannot easily (if at all) be separated by administrative or legislative means. The present Western system of libel laws (and, in Britain, contempt of court) is clumsy and imperfect, but may be the best we can do without making the media into organs of the state and journalists into hobbled government employees.

The single force which can seriously impinge on media freedom—indeed, move government toward statutory controls—is public outrage and a consequent electoral pressure on the institutions of government. If this is to be forestalled, the effort will have to come from editors, proprietors, and, primarily, from journalists themselves. This might begin with the modest acknowledgment that journalists are not archons working for God and the true good Utopia, but vain, power-hungry, and self-interested people working for and responsible to other citizens—and as subject to nemesis as anyone else.¹⁹

At this point my focus moves on to the area of journalistic ethics, which will be the subject of the third and final article in this series.

¹⁷ I mean no reference to the London paper *The Observer* or to any other paper of that name. The names in the text are translations of *Pravda* and of the unforgettable *Völkischer Beobachter*.

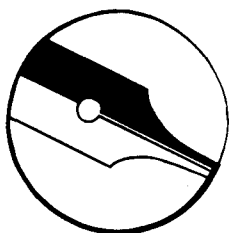
¹⁸ Goldstein quotes James Reston, a senior editor of the *New York Times*: "Some of the old newspaper traditions, of course, we maintain. Our self-righteousness, I can assure you, is undiminished. Our capacity to criticise everybody and our imperviousness to criticism ourselves are still, I believe, unmatched by . . . anybody else."

¹⁹ This year nemesis came to the print-and-craft unions of Fleet Street in the form of Rupert Murdoch. Journalists caught up in the resultant battle were upset about the way Murdoch treated them. Writing in the 2 February *Observer*, Neal Ascherson lamented about this at length, claiming that the self-respect of a few *Sunday Times* journalists had been damaged. From outside Fleet Street it looked rather as though their vanity had been shaken down a bit, which in the circumstances may not have been a bad thing.

CONVERSATION

After the Cultural Delirium

OCTAVIO PAZ in conversation with JEAN-FRANÇOIS REVEL



provincial now? What are your views on this new historical situation?

OCTAVIO PAZ: Is the situation so new? On the one hand we are European, as is North America. At the same time we are on the fringe—doubly so. To start with we are the heirs of a culture—that of Spain and Portugal—that itself became marginal in the 18th century. Spain never really had an Enlightenment. And then we Latin Americans had a wretched 19th century: our “wars of independence” failed to modernise our countries.

But all these disadvantages became advantages when the intellectuals of Latin America turned towards Europe in order to assimilate its culture. We saw Europe as a whole. We have learned a great deal since the beginning of this century—not from Spain, principally from France. And through France we became interested in German philosophy, in English literature; and, of course, we went back to Spain. We are thus

JEAN-FRANÇOIS REVEL: *Latin America, which for a long time appeared to be on the fringe culturally, is in the process of becoming a vital centre from which we can in fact best understand other cultures and the political and cultural problems of our world. Hasn't there been a reversal of roles here? Isn't Europe becoming*

remote descendants of the West. Our remoteness gives us a viewpoint that is often somewhat aloof and polemical.

—How do you account for the contrast between this cultural success of Latin America and its relative economic and political failure?

PAZ: Economic failure stems from political failure. People have often spoken of Latin America as a victim—first of the Spanish and Portuguese empires, then of European imperialism, and finally of the United States. Obviously there is an element of truth in this. The imperialisms of foreign great powers in Latin America were in many instances disastrous. In Mexico this goes without saying. But our economic misfortunes—our so-called “underdevelopment”—stem principally from our political situation. They stem from the role of the state in our countries, for the state in Latin America has meant the junta. The state has been the fundamental obstacle to the modernisation of our countries.

We fashioned our independence under the intellectual influence of the French Revolution and the American Revolution. But it was a failure because our societies were not ready for it—they were not modern. The state to which Independence gave rise was the absolutist patrimonial state of 17th-century Spain and Portugal. The patrimonial state is the one in which the Prince governs with his servants, his slaves, and his family—in other words, where he regards the realm as

OCTAVIO PAZ, the well-known Mexican poet, has had a half-dozen volumes of his poems translated into English; he is also the editor of an anthology of Mexican poetry (with translations into English by Samuel Beckett, Grove Press, 1958). “Octavio Paz: A Study of his Poetics”, by Jason Wilson, was published by Cambridge University Press in 1979.

JEAN-FRANÇOIS REVEL writes a regular “Paris Notebook” for ENCOUNTER. Among his books are works of travel (in Italy), literary criticism (Proust), philosophy (a two-volume history), and world politics (“How Democracies Perish”, 1985).

ARE BOTH CONVERSATIONALISTS a shade too optimistic in registering an end to the “cultural delirium” which has held generations of Latin American intellectuals in a kind of fevered disorientation?

Nor is it only the Latin Americans who have been in the thrall of a Paris cultural-ideological atmosphere which both Paz and Revel deplore and whose “passing” they welcome. The Japanese intelligentsia, too, has throughout the post-War period associated itself with what it took to be “the French sensibility.” Recently the “Japan Times” (Tokyo, 22 April) noted sadly “the end of an era” (with the deaths of Sartre, de Beauvoir, and Jean Genet) but still looked forward to the “challenges and pleasures” to which they had become addicted.

“Most of all [the “Japan Times” noted] one awaits the renewal of the creative mystery that has made so much of the world an intellectual suburb of Paris.”

The suburban mind doesn’t give up easily.

M.J.L.

his personal property. Throughout Europe and in North America revolution, or simple evolution, replaced the patrimonial state with the modern state, belonging to all, whereas in Latin America the patrimonial state continued in existence without modern government. We adopted a positivist, liberal, even socialist philosophy, but—underneath—the inner workings remained those of the patrimonial state. The administrative and economic privileges of the Mexican bureaucracy are political in origin, and spring from the political monopoly enjoyed by the ruling party.

The way to the modernisation of Latin America lies through political democratisation. In order to modernise socially and economically we must first modernise political power—in other words, we must have more democracy. I see no other system.

—In your last book, "One Earth, Four or Five Worlds",¹ you speak of the way in which the self-critical spirit of Europe has become, as it were, perverted. If I have understood you correctly, up until the mid-20th century criticism in Europe was a purifying activity; it consisted in getting rid of the dross, of combating what needed to be done away with, but for the purpose of improving the whole. However, for the last twenty years or so the sole aim of European self-criticism has been, according to you, to destroy European civilisation.

PAZ: Criticism in Europe was, originally, criticism of power, and it was also a critique of orthodoxies. This was the case with Voltaire or with Kant. In the 20th century there is suddenly a kind of huge void. Everything that was previously criticism of orthodoxies turns instead into an apologia for Utopias. We no longer have criticism of religions, as in the 18th century, but on the contrary an apologia for *concealed religions*—for example, the religion of the Communist Revolution.

Basically this is the big difference between Voltaire and Jean-Paul Sartre. Voltaire's work offers a comprehensive criticism of orthodoxy, of "the childhood that lives on in us." Sartre's work is characterised by nostalgia for that childhood, for wholeness. That is how modern criticism has become perverted into an encomium for a concealed religious alienation.

—Are, then, the true heirs to the age-old critical struggles of the European intelligentsia the Soviet dissidents?

PAZ: And also certain Western European figures—Camus, for example, at one point. But yes, broadly speaking, it is the East European writers who have taken over this role. In a word, they are fighting for spiritual freedom against what oppresses that freedom. They are not fighting in a climate of freedom for intolerant, sectarian solutions.

—Does it not seem to you that since 1970—perhaps it would be more accurate to say since 1975—a new and original form of

critical thought has emerged in Western Europe, namely a criticism of false criticism?

PAZ: Yes, indeed. But the majority of Latin American intellectuals are still loyal heirs to the theological thought of the 17th century. That thought is still wedded to its forms of worship, and what it worships today is the political orthodoxies of the 20th century. There are, nevertheless, writers who have broken with that tradition—Vargas Llosa in Peru, for instance; Gabriel Infante in Cuba; and a number of other Cuban writers who became victims of Castro after having been his friends and followers. In Chile, similarly, there are several original figures—Jorge Edwards, for instance—and in Mexico there is a whole group that I regard as quite remarkable, centring on the review *Vuelta*. Broadly speaking, though, in Latin America there is still a certain *archaism* in the attitude of some of our intellectuals towards politics.

—Have the changes that have been taking place in Europe over the last ten years, particularly in France, been noticed in Latin America?

PAZ: Yes, they have. At first they frightened and shocked people, because basically many writers—and particularly university teachers and journalists—had been more or less directly influenced by, moulded by, the French ideological debate as it unfolded from 1945 onwards under the wing of Marxism and of Jean-Paul Sartre in particular. All those people are today frightened and saddened by the fact that France has abandoned that ideology.

—And don't they ask themselves why?

PAZ: Yes, they do. They are just beginning to feel the first twinges of doubt. Now they no longer talk about "the Soviet model" or "the Cuban ideal." They keep quiet, ashamed to bring that up; yet they still storm at the Americans. They see the United States as the universally guilty party, the embodiment of evil. They have transferred all their current anguish to this kind of fiendish spectre that the United States has become in their eyes.

ANALYSING AMERICAN CIVILISATION, you say that this is really the first civilisation without an historical awareness. According to you, the United States is a country that for a very long time lived without a past and with nothing but a future. As a result, America only discovered the historical dimension, or (as you put it) reached historical awareness, by way of decadence or of believing that it is entering its period of decadence.

PAZ: Wrongly, in my opinion. . . .

—In mine too; but isn't that in fact the way Americans see themselves?

PAZ: The United States is the only truly modern country in

¹ See, in *ENCOUNTER* (February), Jean-François Revel, "The Clouds of History."

history, the first country to have been created deliberately. It is not a product of obscure historical forces. It is a country created by active immigration seeking to build a Utopia on virgin soil. Utopia is by definition outside history. But the United States, by the very force of history, found itself at the centre of the historical stage, and since the beginning of the century it has been at the centre of world history. It has discovered that the future is a Utopia, that the future is beginning to become present and even *passé*. It has become a country like any other, an empire like any other.

This is the great paradox of history: the Americans have made an empire without wishing to be an empire—and quite unlike the Romans, the French, the Spanish, the British, the Chinese. But this will also prove to be a major political and historical inferiority in the face of others, particularly in the face of the Russians.

—Where does our modern obsession with decadence come from? Why is the subject broached so often?

PAZ: This is a very enigmatic concept. Who knows exactly what “*décadence*” means? Even historians nowadays are beginning to doubt whether the concept can be applied to the Roman Empire. The idea of decadence stems in my opinion from the central failure of modernity. Modernity did indeed (as the 18th century believed) free men’s minds, destroy superstitions, and make possible considerable economic progress; but it left an extraordinary gap in people’s awareness. The first to speak of decadence were either philosophical thinkers such as Nietzsche (who denounced the nihilism of modernity) or religious thinkers. Here again, as in the case of intellectual criticism directed against the West, we see the despair of the modern world as it finds itself deprived of the old religious and metaphysical certainties and can find nothing to take their place. There is the very great problem here of the difficulty of being free, the difficulty of being alone in the world—*sans père, sans Dieu*.

—But there is also talk, is there not, of decadence in relation to modernity itself? One has the impression that modernity has come to a halt, that it is breaking up, that it cannot go on. . . .

PAZ: Yes, it’s *un thème à la mode*, this fashionable business of modernity, “post-modernity”, and so on. I have to say that one of the first to think about this problem was myself—if you’ll forgive me for saying so . . .

—It’s what interviews are for, after all. . . .

PAZ:—not in the political sense but in terms of literature and art. When I arrived in Paris after the War, in 1945-46, I found that the literary scene was dominated on one hand by the Communists—people like Louis Aragon—and on the other hand by Sartre and the existentialists, with Albert Camus forming one island and the Surrealist group another.

I always felt sympathetic towards the Surrealists because they were keeping the old subversive, poetic, revolutionary faith intact. At the same time I realised that, in terms of poetics, as an artistic adventure, Surrealism had run its

course. But it was not only Surrealism that had run its course so had our whole concept of “modern art” since Romanticism. We have finished with the concept of *l’art moderne*. In this sense modernity is over and a new era has begun—it began around 1950—an era in which art is not concerned with modernity. And in this sense—here we come back to where we started, namely Latin America—I believe that we Latin American writers were among the first to perceive the futility of the *avant-garde* idea. Nevertheless, Surrealism—not just Surrealist poetics, but above all Surrealist morality and Surrealist ethics—was crucial as far as I was concerned.

DOES IT NOT SEEM TO YOU THAT, among Latin American intellectuals, strictly literary modernity and the *avant-garde* idea in art have been replaced by their conception of political modernity, their idea that the writer is modern because he is a revolutionary militant?

PAZ: There’s also an element of opportunism involved. The permanent revolutionary stance adopted by intellectuals—because they are not real revolutionaries—is bound up in Latin America with a career problem. In the universities and in the world of journalism it is a badge of respectability. That’s the Establishment. The old Establishment was Right-wing; the present establishment is Left-wing. It’s a fact of life for anyone embarking on a university career.

—But weren’t you suggesting that there were the beginnings of a development in the opposite direction?

PAZ: In Mexico there was a Right. It was impassioned, religious, intelligent, sometimes brilliant, occasionally quite fascinating—Vasconcelos, for instance. But it has disappeared. We no longer have a Right, just as in France there is no more Right-wing thought. Thought is now the monopoly of the Left. Just at the moment we are beginning to see a thaw, as in France, but a very modest and diffident one. Because in the press and at the universities *être de gauche* means not only holding certain ideas but having certain contacts. In Mexico the Left has no real power, but it enjoys an influence out of all proportion to its actual strength because of its virtual monopoly in the field of communications, in the media, in the universities, and in the intellectual world—all activities subsidised by the state. The paternalist Mexican state is the great protector of this world of the Left.

—Why is that?

PAZ: In the case of Mexico I think it is a way for the state to protect itself against its principal enemy, which is the conservative party. The Left serves as a shield, an assault battalion against the National Action Party.

—Which has been achieving some credibility recently. . . .

PAZ: Mainly in the north. There's another very curious thing: the National Action Party was founded by Right-wing Catholic intellectuals. The words "*action nationale*" used occasionally to make me suspect the influence of Charles Maurras, but I subsequently saw that I was wrong. They were Catholics, conservatives, but of the democratic sort. The present generation consists of people who are not intellectuals but middle-class pragmatists hostile to the omnipresence of the state. It is they who have levelled the most widely-heeded criticisms against the sole party in power, the PRI.

I WANTED TO TALK to you also about India. Your diplomatic career—which ended with your resignation in 1969 on account of the repressive measures taken in Mexico against demonstrating students—led to your spending a number of years in India. You naturally took an interest in Indian literature, art, and philosophy; and, beyond India, in the East in general, in all the civilisations of Asia. I believe you even translated something from the Japanese. What is your view of Asia now?

PAZ: I remember Max Weber's theory, which sought to prove that capitalism was not possible in China or India. I believe he was wrong. Confucianism constituted a major ideological ferment. In every Far Eastern country to which Confucian thought spread—China, obviously; Japan; Korea—it gave rise to possibilities of development that have either already been extensively and very strikingly realised, or are yet to come.

I am a great believer in "cultural factors" enabling one to understand the developmental success of certain Asian countries. We Latin Americans have always been prisoners of our *représentations mentales*. The secret of this contrast possibly has to do with the fact that we are, as peoples, products of Europe's past. In European culture, it seems to me, intellectual differences are fundamental, and they create incompatibilities. If you are a Protestant you cannot be a Buddhist; in fact you are, of necessity, anti-Buddhist. If you are a capitalist, you cannot be a socialist. The civilisations of Europe and Latin America rest on antitheses of identity, on mutual exclusions.

In complete contrast, China and Japan are plural societies in which antitheses are resolved in temporary syntheses. Many aspects of Japanese society are extremely rigid, having hardly changed since the time of the shoguns. At the same time it is a modern society, and no one believes it is necessary at all costs to get rid of one thing in order to have the other. I would not call this pragmatism, because pragmatism is more what characterises American thinking. I would call it a union of opposites—in the Oriental tradition in which oppositions are not stereotyped. It is what has made possible the adoption of elements of Western thought without any profound change in the old way of life.

—Is that also true of India?

PAZ: No, India is different. To start with, India is an Indo-

European civilisation. I'm not talking about the Islamic contribution here, only about the traditional India, the old India. Something extraordinary has happened in India over the last twenty years: a continent that has always been the scene of the most tragic famines has become self-sufficient in food.

As regards its relations with Moscow, let's be quite clear in our minds here. Of course India is diplomatically very close to the Soviet Union. But in terms of its economy, the whole way it operates, and in terms of the deep ties that bind societies together it is much closer to the West and to the United States—whom, moreover, it has to thank for its "green revolution." Its relations with the Soviet Union have nothing to do with any kind of dependence or even ideological complicity. They are dictated solely by geopolitical factors: India is concerned to protect itself against Pakistan and China. . . .

—How does this compare with Latin America?

PAZ: In Latin America relations in general are neither pragmatic nor are they based on any analysis of the interests of the country and of the state. They are dominated by prejudice and ideology. In this sense Latin America is a kind of backward product of Europe.

—And what of "liberation theology", that mysterious phenomenon we in Europe find so fascinating?

PAZ: You see, the Church has always been involved in the political struggles of Latin America. Today's condemnation of capitalists by the Latin American clergy is the same as the condemnation of usurers by the theologians of the Middle Ages. They still haven't understood—and, incidentally, this would have caused Marx much amusement—that modern capitalism bears no resemblance to usury. They want to rescue the poor from their poverty, but at the same time they reject the conditions of an economy of expansion.

WHAT CONCLUSION DO YOU DRAW from the path you have taken personally, and how do you account for it?

PAZ: I believe I can speak for the generation of the 1930s, which has suffered simultaneously from Fascism, Marxism, and Revolution.

I was in Spain in the 1930s. When I returned to Mexico in 1940 the literary world of Latin America was dominated by poets of a Communist inclination, such as Pablo Neruda and César Vallejo. I had the good fortune to make the acquaintance of Victor Serge, who opened my eyes—or began to open my eyes—to the reality of the Soviet Union. Then I left for the United States, where I moved in the circle associated with *Partisan Review*. Immediately after the War I went to Paris. As I was saying before, in Paris you had

Sartre on the one hand and Breton on the other. I had the wisdom, I think, to see that true political thought, authenticity, and realism were on the side of the poet André Breton—morality, too. I immediately saw Sartre as the “*intellectuel délirant*”, a disordered intellectual. It was the philosopher, in fact, not the poet, who was calling up monsters hostile to reason. What was it Goya said?

—“*The sleep of reason breeds monsters.*”

PAZ: It's odd—one of the French writers I most admired in my youth was Valéry. Later he more or less faded into the background. However, I've been rereading him recently,

and I find that the really great French philosopher of our time is not Sartre but Paul Valéry, particularly as revealed in the posthumously published *Cahiers*. When I went back to France after 1950, there had been a fresh cultural development—not just in France, in fact, but throughout the world. This was the seizure of power by the professors, the new pre-eminence of critics over creators. The theoreticians had managed to drive out the poets and the novelists. I believe the “cultural revolution” we were talking about at the beginning would not be complete if, in addition to the ideological adjustment, there were not also a return to the imagination.

We must restore to the imagination the function that has been usurped by the professors and the theoreticians.

AUTHORS

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Penelope Lively's most recent novel, *According to Mark*, was published in 1984 by William Heinemann, who earlier that year brought out her collection of short stories, *Corruption*—the title story appeared in the March 1984 ENCOUNTER. “The Crimean Hotel” is included in her forthcoming collection, *Pack of Cards: Stories 1978-1986*, which Heinemann are to publish on 11 August.

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John Cotton's latest book of poems is *The Crystal Zoo* (Oxford University Press, 1985).

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Tudor Revolution in Government (1953), itself represented a revolution in Tudor studies.

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EAST & WEST

Letter from Athens

The Greek Malaise

By John Loulis



TWELVE YEARS AFTER the establishment of democracy in Greece, the country is facing its most serious economic crisis. The factors which have induced this time of trouble are as simple as they are dramatic.

(1) The public sector deficit, which increased by 41% from 1983 to 1984 (31.3 billion drachma), accounts for 18% of the total government debt.

(2) The current account deficit reached \$2.2 billion in 1984, and in the first six months of 1985 (on an annual basis) was \$3 billion.

(3) Greece joined in 1982 the ranks of the twenty major borrowers in the world (by value of loans), and witnessed a foreign debt that nearly tripled from \$4.5 billion at the end of 1978 to \$12.4 billion at the end of 1984 (according to Bank of Greece statistics). The OECD adds \$6 billion to that debt. As a well-known Greek economist noted: "By constantly borrowing abroad one can, of course, 'export' domestic inflation, but such a policy leads nowhere, except to a rescheduling of debts and, eventually, to bankruptcy. . . ." According to the latest International Monetary Fund report on the Greek economy: "It is urgent to adopt measures to contain the growing fiscal deficits. . . ."

The official and unofficial devaluation of the Greek drachma, mainly during the years 1983-85, has done very little to help an economy that is becoming increasingly "socialised" and correspondingly less and less competitive and productive. In effect, the negative trade balance took a turn for the worse as imports raced from \$6.97 billion in 1983 to \$7.265 billion in 1984, or about one-and-a-half times more than exports.

(4) Inflation hovers around 18-20%, and is expected—at least in the short term—to increase. Unemployment, now at about 8-10%—in spite of massive expansion in the public sector, mainly during the years 1981-84—is on the rise.

All such developments are hardly surprising if one bears in mind only one figure: that the State in Greece now controls—as some economists claim—*more than 60% of the Gross National Product*. But if one tries to probe deeper, to get to the roots of the "Greek malaise" which followed a dramatic

transformation in Greek society, it is important to discuss not only changes in the hierarchy of values and the so-called "battle of ideas", mainly since 1974, but also briefly, developments in Greece after the War.

If I were to attempt to describe in the simplest of terms the chief characteristics of the emerging post-War Greek society, the bitter civil war which followed (1946-49), and the years of reconstruction, I would argue that there existed a combination of statism (imposed from the top) and individualism (on a grass-roots level). The Greek state—with its "Bavarian roots" in the reign of King Otto—had been from the outset particularly centralised and interventionist. The traditional patronage system—fostered by "bosses" of all shades, politicians from Left to Right—helped to strengthen such tendencies. On the other hand, the average Greek has always been an individualist, striving to create his own business, and inclining particularly towards commerce (and of course, shipping). It is hardly surprising that Greeks operating outside their own country—in environments where individualism is not stifled by an ever-increasing state bureaucracy—have proved to be hard-working, creative, and successful entrepreneurs. Recently, however, especially since 1974, the average Greek, under the influence of new ideas and values, has been gradually undergoing a metamorphosis.

THERE ARE, in my view, two explanations for the tendency of Greek political élites to opt for statist policies. The first has to do with the fact that they created and supported patron-client relationships ("clientage networks"). These structures provided a mechanism for the distribution of favours (usually in the form of jobs) in the public sector, which thus gradually expanded. This created a kind of vicious circle. As the bureaucracy became larger and more complicated, the client structures were strengthened—because the distribution of favours regularly took the form of assisting the individual in his increasingly complex and frustratingly time-consuming dealings with the bureaucrats. Thus, "clientism" encouraged statism, and statism in turn strengthened clientism.

Secondly, since Greek political parties were strictly "personalistic" (and thus authoritarian) in their structure, their leaders were bound to develop a *paternalistic* outlook *vis-à-vis* society, and tended to view suspiciously any modern, liberal widening of individual freedoms, initiatives, and choices. They all to a man preferred to view the individual as a selfish and irresponsible being, an "immature son" who needed constant guidance from above. Such guidance was bound to be taken over and provided by an ever-expanding state.

Finally, statism was encouraged by the underdeveloped political culture, which fostered authoritarianism—often practised in the years following the civil war by an intolerant and over-reaching state (e.g. the requirement of documents to attest that one had "healthy social views").

However, in spite of the statism of the contemporary political élites (especially from 1950-67), Greek individualism performed an economic miracle in transforming a land ravaged by three years of German Occupation and another three years of civil war into a dynamically developing country. As one historian observed (William H. McNeill, in

The Metamorphosis of Greece Since World War II (1978), the conservative government of that time had inaugurated:

“... a more general dependence on market forces than had previously been attempted. Various barriers to import and export were removed, and in 1953 an obedient Parliament passed a law guaranteeing foreign investors against nationalisation of their property. At first, the effect of such liberalisation was masked by continued inflation of the Greek currency; but in 1954 a revaluation of the drachma established an exchange rate of 30 drachmae to \$1 which, as it turned out, lasted unchanged for twenty years.”

IT WAS UNDER Constantine Karamanlis's eight-year government—which brought an unprecedented stability to Greek political life—that these liberalised economic policies, together with the Karamanlis administration's investment in infrastructure, began to pay off. Overall (particularly during the years 1951-62, when prices remained relatively stable), private enterprise was allowed to perform this “miracle”, and it led to the expansion of average incomes from 4,775 dr. in 1951 to 12,962 by 1962.

“... This expansion of incomes was primarily a result of innumerable small-scale, individual enterprises seizing upon some new possibility and making the most of it. The sector that expanded most rapidly was manufacturing: but the average number of employees per manufacturing establishment remained no more than four persons. In other words, family-scale enterprise predominated in manufacturing as well as in service occupations and agricultural work. The efficiency with which the Greek nuclear family could pursue gain, by a combination of hard work, shrewd exploitation of market opportunities, and rigorous saving for the future, lay behind the Greek economic miracle which, in its way, was just as spectacular as anything happening in Germany. . . .”

During the period 1958-78 the Greek economy grew rapidly and substantially. The Gross National Product, in constant prices, increased at an average rate of 6.5% between 1958 and 1974, and of 5% between 1974 and 1978. During the same period, the Net National Product and Income increased at rates more or less comparable to those of the GNP. If we take into account the fact that during this time the average rate of growth of the population was below 1%, it is clear that the country was experiencing a developmental boom which improved the standard of living of the whole population. I should also note that the rate of growth that the Greek economy achieved during this time was higher than corresponding rates for the same period in most other European countries.

All this, of course, does not mean that during those years “statism” was not a present factor. As the Greek journalist Costas Kolmer has noted, in 1953 the banking system was indirectly brought under state control through a law

“under which the Ministry of Finance was empowered to

represent and vote for all social security funds, charitable organisations and other institutions that had major shareholdings in Greek commercial banks. . . . [During] the first eight years of the Karamanlis administration the state established itself in the fields of electricity, communications, tourism, and other sectors where no state involvement had existed before. The auspices at the outset were favourable because international economic conditions allowed a perpetuation of government deficits, while the private economic sector reacted positively.”

In spite of state expansion, the predominant values in Greece, up to 1967, remained *individualistic*. Furthermore, it was clear to most Greeks that the increase in their incomes was mainly due to their own efforts, their own hard work, and their individual entrepreneurial skills. However, the collapse of democracy in 1967 and the corresponding bankruptcy of the traditional personalistic and clientelistic policies was bound to prove a dramatic turning-point. It was then that socialist (or collectivist) and statist ideas started to grow, and gained an ever-increasing acceptance.

THE COLONELS' JUNTA, which took power on 21 April 1967, proved to be one of the most unpopular régimes in Greek history, and finally (as in Argentina) collapsed under the impact of its adventurism and folly in foreign affairs. The juntist interlude undoubtedly left behind it a catalytic legacy in the field of ideas and social attitudes. With the country's intellectual élite and the educated youth particularly, as a reaction to all the views expounded by the Colonels, there was a dramatic turn to the Left, mainly in search of ideas which departed radically from whatever the Junta's régime had (or appeared to have) represented. As Prime Minister George Rallis observed after the fall of the Junta:

“One of the greatest evils caused by the Juntist dictatorship is that for most young people who were developing psychologically during that period, authoritarianism, the disappearance of basic freedoms, and the loss of human dignity were identified exclusively with the dictatorial Right. As an extension of this (a specious but none the less almost unavoidable conclusion), the opposite of such sufferings, the most precious of values, freedom, was identified with the Left.”

In effect, everything that sounded as if it was identified with fashionable Western progressivism of all shades was assuming a newly-found lustre. Nationalisations or “socialisations” were necessary in order to create a new and more “just” and “equal” society. The “commanding heights” of the public sector had not only to “expand” but also to “control” and “guide” the whole economy. Almost total state planning was, thus, a necessity, and private enterprise at best a necessary evil. Profits were the fruits of “capitalist exploitation.” Businessmen were presented as pilferers and predators. Strangely enough, the Colonels were far from being “free marketeers”, let alone individualists. (Dictator George Papadopoulos had in fact stressed the need to

“socialise our individual aims”, and called for a strong state that would “guide” the economy.) However, since the Colonels were anti-Leftists, the values that the Left represented inevitably became fashionable and were correspondingly revered. Furthermore, socialism was combined with, and strengthened by, an outburst of ultra-nationalism and anti-Westernism (the West was blamed for the Cyprus débâcle and, indeed, for the Junta régime); and all of these ideological strands came to be represented and expanded by Andreas Papandreou’s Panhellenic Socialist Movement. Papandreou, whether one likes it or not, has indeed revolutionised Greek politics. By building a “new party” he created a grass-roots organisation that spread PASOK’s gospel into every Greek village. By introducing ideological debate to a political scene dominated by old family and personality feuds, he appeared as the sole politician with a modern vision for change, and thus was able to exploit the shift to the Left in Greek public opinion.

How did the Greek conservatives—who had basically run the country before 1967—respond to the new and powerful ideological tidal wave which followed the fall of the Junta? Did they attempt to promote a dynamic and individualistic alternative ideology to counter the rising ideas and corresponding values of the Left? Hardly. After all, for many years they had neither understood the importance of ideas nor shed their statist tendencies. They remained a political élite which simply understood power, manipulated the state with the aim of increasing their authority, and practised unlimited “pragmatism” in order to gain governmental supremacy. Guided by such “pragmatism”, Greek conservatives chose the easiest but, in the long run, the most destructive path. They tried to ride the crest of the Left-wing wave by claiming that they too “did not hesitate to take socialist measures.” Instead of damning nationalisation and offering “privatisation”, they expanded the state sector, and indeed prided themselves that they could nationalise even more than their socialist rivals. Unlike their American or British or Continental counterparts, they failed to articulate a classically liberal vision of political and economic freedom. They surrendered ideologically to the Left. They accepted that the congeries of Left attitudes would dictate the new ruling values of Greek society.

ALL THIS naturally brings to mind F. A. Hayek’s libertarian observations in *The Constitution of Liberty* (1960):

“Let me now state what seems to me the decisive objection to any conservatism which deserves to be called such. It is that by its very nature it cannot offer an alternative to the direction in which we are moving. It may succeed by its resistance to current tendencies in slowing down undesirable developments, but, since it does not indicate another direction, it cannot prevent their continuance. It has, for this reason, invariably been the fate of conservatism to be

dragged along a path not of its own choosing. The tug of war between conservatives and progressives can only affect the speed, not the direction, of contemporary developments. . . .”

As John O’Sullivan notes:

“... ideological vagueness has been the definition of conservatism in most western countries in the last century: certainly, it is of English conservatism. The classic conservative approach pioneered by Disraeli, taken up by Stanley Baldwin and other Prime Ministers, has been defined as ‘leaning against the predominant heresy of the day.’ In the 19th century conservatives would have leaned against, let us say, liberalism and in this century against socialism. Of course, ‘leaning’ is not ‘opposing.’ It also means including certain elements of the predominant heresy in your own policy, rather than wholesale opposition. . . .”¹

This is the melancholy explanation of what happened in Greece during the years 1974-81, when society under the impact of new values was led along a statist course, with Greek conservatives affecting the speed rather than the direction of this development. Thus, by 1981, the socialist electoral landslide was merely a formality, as the dominant ideas of the day were articulated in the ballot-box.

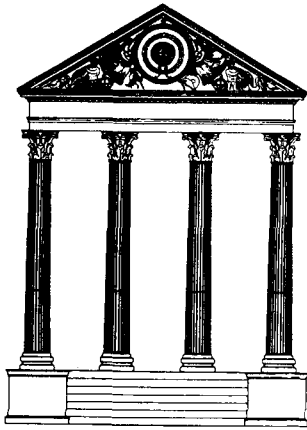
THE FIRST SYMPTOMS OF “the Greek malaise” in the economy appeared under the Junta, and in 1978 under conservative administrations: inflation, a drop in the rate-of-growth, a balance-of-payments deficit, etc. It was the conservative “New Democracy” government’s statist policies which prompted the crisis: when not contradictory and confusing, they were characterised by the following features: nationalisation of large companies (banks, transport, refineries, etc); heavy taxation of private companies; the creation of a large number of public corporations; a dramatic rise in public spending, public borrowing and deficits; a substantial rise in employment in the public sector; numerous new controls and regulations (import restrictions, price freezes, rent controls, etc.); and a generally negative approach to private enterprise and “profit.” This policy resulted in a drop in investment from the private sector, a gradual increase in public spending, and the creation of large government deficits—leading both to a decrease in the rate of growth of the GNP and to a rising rate of inflation.

Four years of socialism were bound to lead to even greater problems as more of the same bitter medicine was applied. By 1983, as the OECD had warned (among other things), Greece’s public deficit was one of the highest in the OECD area.

The dramatic rise in unemployment under the socialist régime was hardly surprising, since profits had been squeezed by taxation, price freezes, and large increases in the salaries of lower-income groups. In effect, the 1,700 industries which accounted for 90% of industrial production suffered a loss of 8.4 billion drachmas in 1982, as against 14.3 billion profits in

¹ John O’Sullivan, in *The New Liberalism*, ed. J. C. Loulis (Athens, 1981).

“The Misfortune of Being Greek”



YOUR MISTAKE is to think of the current Greek “hostility to the West” as a mere topical governmental phenomenon. It ought to be seen in the perspective of centuries, even of millennia. When the ancient Romans conquered the Hellenic world, that constituted the first shock from “the West.” Later, in Byzantine times (and one should look for our Greek roots as much here as in earlier Hellenism) the split in the Church led to Greek Orthodox tirades against “the West.” As for

the fourth and final Crusade, it did not liberate Jerusalem but conquered Constantinople and destroyed so much of Byzantium as to make it an easy prey for the Turks.

Since then, the Greek word for a Westerner is “Frangos”, and like all things “Frankish” has a negative tone. In the 15th century the Archduke Notaras cried out that he preferred “the turban of the Turks to the cap of the Latins!” For the Greeks felt that they had suffered not only under the Ottomans but also, and as grievously, under the Venetians, the Genoans, the French.

We all know that at some point in time there came these noble spirits from the Western world—Lord Byron and other young romanticists, all dedicated to the Greek cause against the Turk. And it is surely true that Greece, without the help of the Western Powers of the day, would never have had a chance in its struggle for national independence in 1830. But what happened thereafter was—until the last Greek Civil War—a long series of unfortunate Western interventions.

IF THIS IS SO, then one must view the “fear of the Turks” in the same historical perspective as the hostility to “the West.” We are dealing here with the experiences of centuries: threats, aggressions, and wars.

It may well be “paranoic” for the Greeks to see enemies and conspiracies everywhere, but they have had their real share of such traumatic experiences, none of which has healed without a scar. How is it, then, that the West can take it for granted nowadays that Greece, historically, culturally, sociologically, “belongs to the West”? What is so lightly overlooked is that we in Greece, after some four centuries of Turkish rule, emerged with very little that could be taken as “in common” with the West.

I would go further and argue, alas, that Greece had not participated in any of the great European movements which have formed modern Europe—from Scholasticism to the Renaissance and Reformation, from the Enlightenment to the Nationalist awakening. Sociologically the country missed the whole historic phenomenon known as “the rise of the bourgeois (or middle) classes.” In the beginnings of the 19th century, the prevailing system was still stuck in forms of an agrarian feudalism, and traces of the European Industrial Revolution were hard to find.

The tourists of old, the 19th-century “travellers”, used to describe Greece as “exotic”, as belonging more to “the

East” than “the West.” And even to this day my Greek countrymen speak of “Europe” as if they didn’t belong to it. We travel “to Europe”; we once studied at a university “in Europe”; we, on an occasional shopping spree, buy goods “from Europe.” To be sure, it remains the great Greek dream to be “Europeanised”, the old aspiration of the 19th-century and early 20th-century idealists. But with the years there has also emerged a great number of intellectuals who have been drawn to some kind of orthodox-eastern cultural or ideological ideal.

AS A CONSEQUENCE, as I see it, the Greeks of all the European peoples feel the greatest pains of an “identity crisis”, the deepest “insecurity.” These feelings are manifested in everyday life—as exaggeration, aggressiveness, and distrust. The fact that Prime Minister Andreas Papandreu can move confidently from one difficulty to another, interrupted only by failures large and small—after all he is pursuing a “proud” and “independent” foreign policy!—has very much to do with this Greek insecurity complex to which I have been trying to call attention. Who thinks it to be a new phenomenon? Peoples who have suffered much under powerless subjection, who were never (or rarely) master of their own land and of their own history, and consequently felt themselves weak and constantly vulnerable, are susceptible to the emotions of pride, and indeed to emotionalism as a way of life.

Aristotle? Well, he may have been the “father of logic” in Greece, but logic is not quite our national virtue. Each of our great decisions depends on sympathies and antipathies, on impulses and instincts. One of our great poets (Solomos) wrote in the 19th century: “My good and beloved and unhappy people—always gullible, always betrayed. . . .” And whether we happen to believe something or to distrust somebody, it has little to do with logic. It should surprise nobody that after a chequered national history of “interventions” the Greeks should come to believe that the Dictatorship of the Colonels (“xenokiniti”) was solely the product of outside interference. Responsibility for the dictatorship? The CIA, of course. So it was only in the natural order of things that every demonstration, even the scraggiest handful, ended up in front of the American Embassy. All roads used to lead to Rome, and all protest marches today lead to Washington.

IF THERE ARE “charismatic” qualities to the political leadership exercised by Andreas Papandreu in recent years, they are characterised by his sensitivity to “the Greek character”: he knows his Athenians, and knows how to use their peculiarities and weaknesses. It is all there in his appeals to the fears of the Turks, to a non-Spartan love of peace, to frustrated nationalism and misty utopianism and all our other deepest Aegean complexes.

What I am trying to suggest—and I don’t want to disguise my personal feeling about what I lightheartedly call “the misfortune of being Greek”—is that our national political and social life has in the conflict of recent years degenerated into a situation of much anxiety and no little fanaticism—and one, alas, lacking in all rationalism and dialogue, but marked rather by much witch-hunting and recrimination.

“You Greeks are always children”, or so (according to Plato) the Egyptian priests were supposed to have said to Solon. Still and all, after such a long history the Greeks have the uncomfortable feeling that although they may indeed be “children”, they are surely weary of the long years of adolescence that lie behind them.

Nikos Dimou

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1981. During the first two years of Socialist administration, 34,750 small businesses had gone bankrupt. Taxation on property hit the construction sector, while price freezes brought heavy losses in whole sectors of the economy (pharmaceuticals, brewing, milling). . . .

These figures pointed to another alarming development—the decreasing competitiveness of the Greek economy as a whole, but primarily of the small but vital sector of Greek industry. This was mainly due to the steady acceleration in the growth of labour costs and the new laws stipulating “longer holidays” and “shorter working hours.” An OECD report notes that in 1982 such costs in manufacturing increased by 37.5%. Growth in industrial production that year was estimated to have dropped by 4.7%, a percentage which had not been recorded for a quarter of a century. There was also a continuing and steady drop in investment, and many economists spoke of a process of “de-industrialisation.”

Still, I am afraid that these economic statistics do not quite provide us with a picture of the most serious and alarming situation—the change in *values* of the average Greek. It is this development which is certainly at the root of “the Greek malaise.” As opinion polls indicate, the majority of Greeks—particularly the young—want “more nationalisation”, though they appear to recognise that the *private* sector is more effective and productive. In their view, however, expansion of the public sector is necessary because state enterprises serve “the social whole.” One of the most ominous findings is that around 70% of the young (the 18-to-24-year-olds) want to work in the public sector; only 10% want to be employed in the private sector, or to become businessmen.

SO WHAT HAS BEEN HAPPENING to the average Greek’s spirit of enterprise? What has become of the Greek of 1949-67 who, with “a combination of hard work, shrewd exploitation of market opportunities and rigorous saving for the future”, built a dynamic economy out of the country’s ruins? Has he finally succumbed to the new statist teachings and old practices of Greek politicians who have offered him the putative “security” of state protection in order to buy his vote?

In that prophetic book of 40 years ago, *The Road to Serfdom*, there is a passage in which F. A. Hayek describes with uncanny accuracy the transformation of societies to one form of statism or another. The description is pertinent to Greek society today, which statist politicians of both the Left and the Right have helped create:

“The general endeavour to achieve security by restrictive measures, tolerated or supported by the state, has in the course of time produced a progressive transformation of society. . . . This development has been hastened by another effect of socialist teaching: the deliberate disparagement of all activities involving economic risks worth taking but which only few can win. We cannot blame our young men when they prefer the safe, salaried position to the risk of enterprise after they have heard from their earliest youth the former described as the superior, more unselfish and disinterested occupation. The younger

generation of today has grown up in a world in which in school and press the spirit of commercial enterprise has been represented as disreputable and the making of profit as immoral, where to employ a hundred people is represented as exploitation but to command the same number as honourable. . . .”

A characteristic example of how statist values are disseminated in Greek society is provided by a high-school book (final grade), entitled *Texts of Modern Greek Literature*. This state publication includes a preposterous piece by Professor Th. Lianos entitled “Advertising and Its Role”—a text which has hardly anything to do with literature (modern or otherwise) but which launches an all-out attack against the free market system. Among other things, he states:

“Profit from advertising becomes the private profit of the company, while the cost of advertising is borne by the social whole. . . . The expansion of advertising is connected with the development of monopolistic and oligopolistic companies in the capitalist economy of the West. . . . [Advertising] provides an escapism for the consumer so that he can survive the emptiness and misery of capitalist life. . . . In modern capitalist societies man becomes an object of exploitation not only as a working man but also as a consumer. . . .”

Needless to say, no equivalent “literary” text in favour of the free market and capitalism is included in this book of compulsory readings for high-school students.

The ideas and values which became predominant from 1974 onwards have created what I must call “the new Greek” of our time. He seeks security in the public sector, and usually gets there through political and party patronage rather than through competition with his fellows. (Thus he has already developed a model for success, which obviously has nothing to do with hard work or self-improvement, but solely with political influence.) He then joins special-interest groups, which particularly in the monopolistic state enterprises (banks, electricity, telephone corporations) have become all-powerful and in a position to blackmail any government, and consequently secure more and more privileges for him as against non-privileged members of other social groups. He ceases to work, to produce, and even to imagine. He does the least he can, and takes the most he can get. He abuses his monopolistic power over the consumers, who pay more and more taxes to improve his standard of living and get less and less in return from him and his fellow-bureaucrats.

To be sure, not all Greeks can become so privileged. However, they envy his power, and use the same means he used in order to achieve a position like his. As a result, everyone clamours for the expansion of the state bureaucracy, for more nationalisation, for greater “welfare” and “social security.” This desire is masked by a socialist rhetoric (calling for the destruction of “big-business exploiters” and “capitalist leeches”), which functions as a catharsis to the conscience.

A society which fails to produce, to modernise, to innovate and renovate, to imagine, is doomed to stagnate and decline. And this is, I fear, exactly what has been happening, as values

which encourage dynamic and constructive social traits are crushed by “the values of the public employee.” Greek society as a whole is assuming, more and more, the dismal mirror-image of Greece’s bureaucratic, lumbering, inefficient, unimaginative and unproductive state sector. It is indeed on the road to serfdom:

“... the more security becomes a privilege, and the greater the danger to those excluded from it, the higher will security be prized. As the number of the privileged increases and the difference between their security and the insecurity of the others increases, a completely new set of social values gradually arises. It is no longer independence but security which gives rank and status, the certain right to a pension more than confidence in his making good which makes a young man eligible for marriage, while insecurity becomes the dreaded state of the pariah in which those who in their youth have been refused admission to the haven of a salaried position remain for life....”

THE DOMINANCE OF “public-employee values” was bound to produce adverse effects for everyone—even the “sheltered” public employee, who might not lose his job but saw his standard of living dropping. As Hayek warned:

“And if, as has become increasingly true in each trade in which conditions improve, the members are allowed to exclude others in order to secure to themselves the full gain in the form of higher wages or profits, those in the trades where demand has fallen have nowhere to go and every change becomes the cause of large unemployment. There can be little doubt that it is largely a consequence of the striving for security by these means in the last decades that unemployment and thus insecurity for large sections of the population has so much increased. . . . Thus, the more we try to provide full security by interfering with the market system, the greater the insecurity becomes.”

That is what is happening in Greece today. The socialists are being forced, hesitantly, to “rediscover the market” and the need somehow to infuse Greek society with the individualistic values which the dominant Moloch-state ideas have helped to destroy.

So Andreas Papandreou has started to speak in a way in which his conservative rivals hardly dared to when they were in power. The socialist Prime Minister is now making dramatic appeals to whatever has remained of the private sector by vowing to “create a favourable economic environment, which will create the appropriate conditions for the development of private enterprise. Foreign investment is welcome.” He added: “And we are not against business

profits. Profit is what moves private enterprises. . . . The state has expanded too much. Private enterprise will play an important role [in the country’s economic recovery]. It is a midsummer night’s dream to imagine that the public sector—as it stands today—is in a position to assume responsibilities which belong to the private sector. . . . Capitalism, though undergoing a crisis, is the dominant economic system in the world markets. . . . Models of state socialism are on the retreat.” “Our aim”, stated Costas Simitis, the Minister of National Economy, “is production through profit and not through redistributive state interventions.”

For the first time, the pro-Government press has been regularly attacking its own public sector for waste, inefficiency, and lack of productivity. One Leftist daily newspaper noted: “Who in this country doesn’t know that inflation is now fuelled by the centralised and inefficient public sector whose employees absorb the largest part of the national income, not only without producing, but also, by their bureaucracy, hindering every development? . . .”

Does this mean that the reigning “public employee values” are now being seriously challenged in a society deep in crisis? Quite possibly so, though it is (as in Mitterrand’s France, where necessity was also the mother of revisionism) too early to say. With Greek conservatives still incapable of formulating and disseminating their own ideas, it is for the socialists, as they perform an inevitable *volte-face* in their economic approach, to re-examine the ideas they helped to impose, thus leading to their gradual erosion. And it is for liberal intellectuals, outside political parties, to help to deal in their own way with the climate of opinion of a society which endorsed public-employee values and found them hopelessly wanting. What Greece needs now—but might not get in the immediate future—is a new approach that will free rather than inhibit every Greek.

I quote a last apposite passage from *The Constitution of Liberty*:

“... There has never been a time when liberal ideals were fully realised and when liberalism did not look forward to further improvement of institutions. Liberalism is not averse to evolution and change; and where spontaneous change has been smothered by government control, it wants a great deal of change of policy. So far as much of current governmental action is concerned, there is in the present world very little reason for the liberal to wish to preserve things as they are. It would seem to the liberal, indeed, that what is most urgently needed in most parts of the world is a thorough sweeping-away of the obstacles to free growth. . . .”

I have dealt with dismal economic statistics, but it is only through the battle of ideas—and the dominance of such liberal ideas—that new values will emerge: values which will not obstruct but will encourage free growth.

IN THE MARGIN

Polish Notebook

By Melvin J. Lasky



I THINK I can remember the last time I was in Warsaw. I was a toddler of three, trailing along with my parents on a European tour; and as the family album embarrassingly records, I threw myself on to the grand old square by the Vistula, refused to budge an inch, and shouted my head off. If the child is father of the man, then I can understand why there was evidently great difficulty in getting the Polish authorities to put a proper visa into my passport. It was issued at the last minute, just before flight time. I packed hurriedly, promised myself to try this time to be budgeable and keep my tone of voice low.

As things turned out, the vow was hardly necessary. I saw the Warsaw old town only for a minute at midnight, and then we were all shipped off in a bus towards the icy areas of the north-east's "Lake District." Twenty Western academics and intellectuals were to meet twenty of their Polish opposite numbers. When we learned to transliterate the maps, we learned we were on the tragic flat plains of old East Prussia where grand armies had been locked in combat for centuries. Kaliningrad, once the Königsberg of Kant, was an hour's drive up the road; but the Soviet border was inaccessible, sealed tight. Our hotel, bordering on a frozen lake, was handsome and comfortable, built by Finnish contractors, with sauna and heated swimming-pool. Stoutish Polish ladies dutifully performed their gymnastics in the lobbies and corridors, and only occasionally did their vigorous aerobics music float into our conference hall.

No, this was no occasion to return to temperamental ways and raise one's voice. It was the quietest, the gentlest, the

THIS "Letter from Poland" was published, in somewhat shortened form, under the title "No Marx or Lenin, Please—We're Polish", in the "Sunday Telegraph" (London) and in "Die Welt" (Bonn).

most reasonable, and hence the strangest East-West confrontation I have ever attended in my life.

SINCE I caught glimpses of both our co-Chairmen—an Irish sociologist from London, a Polish economist from Warsaw—at the early Sunday-morning mass, I rather imagine that the Church had given its private blessing to our deliberations and that, accordingly, the General Jaruzelski régime with equally cunning informality had put no obstacles in the way of a free and unfettered discussion. For three days, with scarcely a thought about who might be the Party's or the Police's informer in our midst, we ranged widely across every conceivable subject involved in the problem of the Wealth of Nations—why some were rich, and others (Poland by name) miserably poor. Not a word of propaganda was heard in the hall. Hayek and Friedman and Keynes were quoted innumerable times, Marx and Lenin not once. One Oxford don remarked that certain exchanges were rather more free than they could be in England: i.e., when the talk turned to schools, race, and multi-cultural education. (Roger Scruton could speak his piece about the Honeyford case without assaults from a rent-a-crowd mob.)

WHAT WAS going on here? How could the General's Party-line régime, even in its post-Martial-Law relaxation, feel at ease with such pockets of free speech, critical thought, and (even more discomfiting) international fraternisation? Everybody at the round table, and especially at the bar, had a special theory about a totalitarianism in mortal crisis. Some were Polish Communist Party members, and emphasised how even the Marxist theoreticians had, at long last, recognised the bankruptcy of their antiquated body of ideas. Others were heretics, and insisted that the whole country since the repression of *Solidarity* was somehow involved in a "national seminar" to rethink the principles and prospects of a viable (i.e. post-Communist) future. *Solidarity* sympathisers, more concerned with their educational work in the underground, wryly observed that a dictatorial machine runs more smoothly with "safety-valves." Were we, then, quite innocently helping an illiberal government to tighten its mechanisms of control?

I STROLLED along the lake (it thundered ominously as the thaw began to crack its icy cover), and walked through the main streets of the nearby town. Which first superficial impression should one record? That nobody looked hungry? After all, this wasn't Ethiopia, and here the children were licking their ice-cream cones. But all the shops looked half-empty, and the old women standing in queues fumbled with their little ration coupons for food-stuffs. I reckoned there were more *Krakus* jars of dill pickles and marmalades in my own local London Safeway than I could see here on all the high-street shelves. Traffic was sparse at midday, and most of the vehicles were horse-drawn carts and a few Fiat (made-in-Poland) taxis. I also spotted a brand-new Mercedes, packed with cartons and boxes—presumably the

local millionaire peddling his wares on the black market, currently dignified with the name of “the alternative economy”, without which (so much is freely conceded) practically nothing would be available to buy. One conference statistic runs through my head. Some 93% of the building industry is nationalised; of the small private sector, the remaining 7% which wheels-and-deals and barterers for its bricks and mortar, it was reported that it put together almost 54% of the new square footage which was built in Poland last year. Evidently Adam Smith’s much-ridiculed “hidden hand” is still more efficient and resourceful.

Small wonder that nobody in the country appears to believe in the System. “It hasn’t worked”, they say, and will never work: not with Gorbachov “reforms”, nor with Hungarian “moonlighting.” I seem to detect the pessimism in the people’s faces; they appear to walk and talk like some defeated population surviving casually under an indifferent Occupation authority. I remember it from German scenes in the Ruhr and Bavarian villages 40 years ago. Poland also lost its war, but has never really recovered. One has the feeling that if, in some overnight change of system, capitalism were to arrive here at high noon, that evening the whole of Poland would be found celebrating at a full and festive dinner-table.

I PUT A QUESTION TO Czeslaw Pz., an economist, in as technical-neutral way as I know how: “Where has all your Gross National Product gone? . . .” He replies: “There are two ways to lose your GNP. One is the Philippine way, in which Ferdinand and Imelda Marcos steal the country blind. The other way is to have a Communist system, with its nationalised planning boards. . . . You see, we have two albatrosses around our neck with our forced commitment to Marxism-Leninism. Old urban Marx hated the peasants, and Lenin the aristocrat knew nothing about workers. Whom should it surprise that the population is longing for some social arrangement beyond the ruinous narrowness of our Workers-&-Peasants State? . . .”

SOME 30 MILES to the north-east, flat across the old East Prussian plain, is a town called Ketrzyn, and when we learn this is the old German “Rastenburg” there is no stopping our touristic instincts. For in the nearby forest there must be what was left of Hitler’s “*Wolfschanze*” after the 20th-of-July bomb attempt failed and the long retreat to Berlin began.

There it still lay, imploded in its jagged concrete slabs; but I was surprised to see how large the whole Nazi complex was. It was not only the easternmost *Führerhauptquartier* to steal a march on the Russian enemy, but clearly the whole government was there (Bunker Bormann next to Bunker Goebbels, Bunker Himmler between Ribbentrop’s and Goering’s). We stumbled along the icy paths, holding fast to each other as if the cavernous blackness underneath the snow might reach out for us. Boredom set in somewhere between Bunker Jodl and Bunker Keitel. There was a loo, but no promised museum—what should they sell? picture-postcards

of the *Führer*, maps of the Third Reich, a brochure on Colonel von Stauffenberg?

No tourist attraction this. Hitler’s East Prussian memorial lay there on a forgotten battlefield, like some sinister Stonehenge, with no secrets to its slabs and no mysterious play of lights and shadows to hold one for more than a glance.

When we returned home to our hotel, the concierge noted our runny noses, frozen feet, hacking coughs, and put it down to a case of “the German germs.” For him Hitler was still counter-attacking in these parts.

ENGLISH WAS OUR *lingua franca*, but we still had to learn to translate or to transliterate, or in any case to render that Aesopian language, which the Polish intelligentsia had prudently developed for public discourse, into less periphrastic circumlocutions. Was the “tertiary climax” a reference to the arrest of Lech Walesa? What of “conceptual transubstantiations”? I took it to be an oblique reference to the fact that in every Catholic church (at least in those I visited) there was a conspicuous picture of the political martyr, the murdered Father Popieluszko. “Systemic interpenetrations” must be the formula to describe the way in which the official economy (bankrupt) lives and profits by the alternative economy (black) and the surrogate economy (in dollars). It is all of a fascinating and desperate complexity, for the Poles in developing their arcane knowledge seem only to want to prepare the way for a new Keynes, with a revised General Theory, or still better an updated Adam Smith explaining the Poverty of Nations.

Nothing is easy, nor put simply. I listened to hours of intricate explanation on the subject of Polish alcoholism. Demographers compared “Murray Feshbach’s Soviet curve of rising mortality rates” with East European variations. Statisticians challenged the official figures on drug abuse and traffic accidents. Psychologists delineated different forms of Marxist stress and Leninist alienation. This, then, was the alcoholic malaise?

My error was in suggesting the delusive aspect of prices—with vodka selling at one pound the litre bottle, what price drunkenness? If alcohol in London cost so little (rather than eight times that sum), the streets from Holborn to Piccadilly would be packed with inebriated souls. But no. I had overlooked the factor of “collateral collusions.” Witold G. explains: “If a million bottles of vodka come on to the market each month in a black or alternative way (pilferage, home-made hooch, etc.), then the governmental losses—if they were to risk a rise in price to three or four pounds—would triple and quadruple! The régime is powerless. It surely doesn’t want a work-force of tipplers. But it can’t do anything about it. . . . It’s in the same position as the magician Harry Houdini in his last fatal trick. His chains were tied in the wrong way; and when he tried to wriggle out, as he always did in his underwater escapes, he only fastened his chains tighter. Every extra effort locks you in more energetically. Houdini drowned. . . . And we are drowning. . . .”

A philosopher sitting alongside me whispered cautiously, “He shouldn’t really be putting it in that way. The paradigm

of 'socio-biological dislocations' is quite sufficient. . . ."

BE THAT as it may, I finally left Warsaw with a very constructive sense of intellectual dislocation, for Poland is our school for East-West paradox.

If, in the West, the classical trade-union movement seems to have exhausted itself, its welfare victories behind it, its restrictive practices acting as a brake on innovation, not so in Poland. Here the trade-unionists (and *Solidarity* is still there, just beneath the surface) are progressive, using their change-oriented movement to try and break, in Marx's old phrase, "the fetters on the forces of production."

If, in the West, the commitment of Liberation Theology to political radicalism is mostly a naive and dangerously ignorant excursion into revolutionary battlegrounds on which

Marxism-Leninism (and Soviet influence therewith) is likely to emerge, not so in Poland. Here the Church is largely allied with the liberalising forces in civil society, and courageously concerned with the prospect of a non-Communist future . . . or, as it was put to me by one priest, with "the 'soul of man under post-socialism."

Finally, if, in the West, a formula like that nefarious tag of Dr Marcuse's about "repressive tolerance" was the purest rubbish (Marcuse and his irrepressible friends were richly rewarded by the society in which they lived), not so in Poland. An authoritarian régime, which is at once weak, inefficient and unpopular, seeks to maintain its repressive controls by offering pockets of openness, by allowing channels of pluralism, and tolerating a careful measure of differentiated debate and discussion. I know; I was there. Was I helping, or hurting? What creative double standards would resolve the paradox?

Motherhood Considered on May Day

Damn fertility,
 woman is a maypole.
 Children dance
 every day of the year
 holding bright ribbons.
 The intricate ritual
 is measured on mothers.
 Sometimes the pole
 is patterned
 with satin.
 On other days
 sad bands become entangled.
 Ribbons lengthen
 as children grow,
 the dancing is less frequent.
 Ribbons hang limp
 for days and weeks,
 taken up on festive days,
 and woven
 into a holiday.
 Sometimes reins
 become bindings,
 black armbands,
 soiled and torn mementos
 of spring innocence.
 Some maypoles stand for a lifetime,
 tended and well-painted.
 Others fall, lie unregarded,
 are left to the ravages
 of winter.

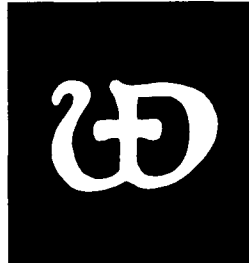
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—Eric Cochrane

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LETTERS

Hooligans & Prosperity

JEFFREY RICHARDS in his refreshingly accurate analysis of the underlying causes of hooliganism ("The Hooligan Culture", ENCOUNTER, November) falls into the most desperate error of a type almost endemic to the liberal mind. He evidently misunderstands his own assessment and tries to persuade himself that the qualities he rightly admires—" . . . a sense of personal and social responsibility, of concern for others, of self-discipline and restraint, of courtesy and conscience"—are to be regained by some "massive shift in political, social, and cultural values: the abandonment of political programmes of materialism, selfishness and unrestrained individualism for policies of social concern and community care." He is even guilty of that remarkable (but perhaps humorous) suggestion that the school-leaving age might usefully be raised to 20.

It is very odd that while observing the beneficial effects of a gentlemanly code of behaviour and commending the puritanical endeavours of the aspirant working class, Mr Richards should not have noticed that both sets of values were closely associated with gross inequalities and individualist materialism. Moreover, whatever did not depend on vastly different incomes and educations was supplied by the painful rituals of physical punishment—these more for the wealthy—or the daily discipline of privation and insecurity for the poor. Thus it may well follow that nothing is less likely to produce the improvement that Mr Richards desires than keeping underoccupied adolescents in perpetual idleness in educational establishments—or indeed any scheme to *inculcate* social concern and usefulness. We have had a great deal of this sort of thing since the 1960s and it is only too apparent where it leads.

As long ago as the fall of Rome, Augustine of Hippo remarked that prosperity is usually bad for one; and if anyone thinks that a saint is less than properly disinterested then I can only add that Gibbon's *History* appears to bear him out. The most prosperous Romans of them all—the Emperors—seldom lasted very long. Ideally, I suppose, we need the austerities and violent opportunities of a protracted war; but, if that is too difficult to arrange in the *Pax Atomica*, then perhaps we could seek some socialist transplant from the other end of Europe—such things as low wages, food

shortages, privilege for the few, authoritarian education, strict physical sanctions, censorship and parsimonious welfare benefits. They would, no doubt, work wonders. Meanwhile let us try to be grateful for the present administration and do what we can to encourage them to protect us from our sillier selves.

MICHAEL TATHAM

*Little Odell
Bedford*

Greek Linguistics

WHAT Peter Mackridge (Letters, April) writes about the exaggerations in John Carr's account of contemporary Greek (January) makes very good sense. Today's Greeks can obviously understand one another perfectly well in official demotic, however hard it may be for them to agree with one another in either demotic or *katharevusa*. The claim that "syntax has all but disappeared" hardly qualifies as a scholarly conclusion. I am puzzled, though, by Mackridge's comment that "syntax means the way in which sounds are combined meaningfully together", and that Carr's statement would be valid only "if the Greeks had practically stopped producing anything but meaningless combinations of sounds."

At least on this side of the Atlantic—and particularly ever since the Age of Chomsky began in 1957 with the pub-

lication of *Syntactic Structures*—syntax means the study of phrase and sentence structure. Sound systems fall under the heading of phonology.

Curiously enough, the ancient Greek word *syntaxis* ("syntax") has come to mean "pension" in the modern language, and perhaps this is a sign of the times. If Browning's Renaissance grammarian were to be reanimated nowadays, given indeed his job-linked partial disability ("dead from the waist down"), chances are that he might be more concerned with obtaining a pension than with giving us the doctrine of enclitic *-de*.

Although the famous Greek "language problem" has abated in intensity, it does still live on. To cite the same example again, it is significant that some Greeks prefer the nominative form *syn-taxi* while others favour *syntaxis*; and in the genitive some use *syntaxis* and others *syntaxeos*.

Would not Peter Mackridge, whose judgment in these matters I greatly esteem, agree with me that this sort of variation can often be correlated with a political stance? Is it too daring to suggest that one might make a fairly good guess, based on the particular variants an individual speaker or writer chooses, as to whether he voted for Mr Papandreou or Mr Mitsotakis in the most recent Greek general elections?

GORDON M. MESSING

*Department of Classics
Cornell University*

The Secret "Below-the-Table" Deal

New Light on the Cuban Missile Crisis—By JULIO NUNEZ

MAY I ADD a footnote—but (as those bottom-of-the page extra remarks often are) an all-important one!—to the otherwise excellent documentation provided by Michael Charlton's three articles on "Star Wars" (ENCOUNTER, February, March, April 1986)?

The conventional account of the duel for world power and influence between the USA and the USSR usually takes its point of departure from the 1962 Missile Crisis over Soviet weapons in Cuba and the American ultimatum. Kennedy challenged Khrushchev. There were days of tension, perhaps even of "brinkmanship." It was, in the ophthalmic phrase of the day, "eyeball to eyeball." Then the Kremlin decided to retreat from the ultimate confrontation. The missiles and bombers which had, in an act of military bravura and political adventurism, been placed to "within 90 miles of Florida", were withdrawn. The status of the US Naval Base at Guantanamo was maintained, and Washington

accepted Fidel's régime as a "reality" not to be subverted.

As I say, the conventional wisdom draws one conclusion from this drama—namely, that the Kremlin was humiliated and, in the phrase which the Soviet representative used to Mr John J. McCloy (and quoted a number of times by Michael Charlton and other historians), the vow was made never to be so humiliated again. The Soviet military-industrial complex would rush to "catch up." Indeed the greatest programme of armament expansion in world-history—which also produced a new Soviet Navy, formidable for the first time in every ocean—was begun, and has continued for 25 unrelenting years. Among other things it has given the USSR a lead in Strategic Defence research; in Anti-Ballistic Missiles and civilian defence (which the USA had dutifully renounced with the McNamara doctrine); and, until the installation (at Chancellor Schmidt's initiative) of *Pershing* and

Cruise, a European advantage with the SS-20s.

Thus, out of the "dumps" of world-political humiliation over the Missile Crisis of 1962, the Soviets forced themselves angrily and resolutely to new heights of world-political strength in the balance of power between East and West. Some foreign-policy critics—the "doves" and other softly-softly advisers—even go on to preach that *any* victory for the West in any world-political crisis can only make things worse. The Kremlin leaders should always be given "a way out", a "chance to save face." The Russians must never be resisted to the point of a humiliating "defeat." To deter them effectively runs the risk of anger, outrage, anxiety; and a renewed bout of Muscovite aggressiveness and expansionism is only to be expected.

ALL THIS OMITS one little fact. This is the "footnote", and it casts a completely different light on (1) what happened in the resolution of the Cuban Missile Crisis; and (2) the real explanation for the renewed programme of major Soviet rearmament. For was it, really, a Soviet "humiliation"?

Last year the "secret" clauses of the Kennedy-Khrushchev deal emerged. The secret part of the agreement suggests, quite to the contrary, that Washington gave as much as it got. And what the Soviets actually got from the Americans (who were far from being the ferocious "hawks" of conventional interpretation) doubtless encouraged the men in the Kremlin. They saw, in a simple, cool and calculating way, the next twenty years in a clear pattern of pressuring the Americans (in Africa, the Middle East); of humiliating them (in Viet Nam) in the growing shadow of increased Soviet strength; of constantly testing their political will on every continent. Not the old Russian neurosis of being "encircled", or "the Bear being driven into a corner", played the big role—but very dry General Staff analysis. It was not a matter of excitable psychology but of calculable strategy and tactics. Not Pavlov was involved, but Clausewitz.

MY SOURCE FOR THIS is nobody less than Jeane Kirkpatrick, Professor of International Relations at Georgetown University in Washington, and the former US Ambassador to the UN during President Reagan's first term. She has written recently (in her column, reprinted in the *Miami Herald*, 21 April) of the "two deals" which ended the Cuba Missile Crisis—"one below the table and one above it." We know all about the public deal—Kennedy and Dean Rusk affirming the Soviet agree-

ment to remove offensive weapons and not to re-install any in Cuba; and the US, in exchange, agreeing to lift the blockade and not to invade Cuba.

What of the *below the table* agreement? I quote from Jeane Kirkpatrick:

"The deal below the table committed the United States to remove U.S. missiles from Turkey when Khrushchev had removed Soviet missile installations from Cuba.

Of this covert arrangement, McGeorge Bundy (Kennedy's chief-of-staff on the National Security Council) said last summer, 'We avoided tremendous bruhaha of selling out our European friends' by removing the supposedly Turkish-owned Jupiter missiles, 'but we did it keeping it secret. Not altogether a happy thing to do. It has cost, playing secret diplomacy.' The secret deal was not confirmed until last year, when previously classified documents were released."

In the light of this, the Cuba Crisis—resolved by an extraordinary secret concession to the Soviets, which must surely have lead them to calculate on extracting even more in the future!—was not a US victory for Containment and Deterrence. It was (for all the inglorious repacking of SAM-7 missiles in Havana for the Moscow journey home-wards) a victory for appeasement. The Kremlin could not have been "humiliated" but only, on balance, encouraged. It is a Soviet policy of "flexible adventurism"—stretch all boundaries, go a little beyond any open and vulnerable frontier—and then obtain, in one deal or another "below the table", a favourable and satisfactory price.

I suggest that we ought to take a look, in this light, at what Eastern strength and imperial ambitions amount to—and how the Western style, substance, temperament (and, indeed, hypocritical secrecy) in recent diplomacy may be encouraging exactly what we started out to discourage. By "detering" without determination, by "containing" without consistency, is fostered precisely just that Kremlin adventurist confidence which is so dangerous to world peace and stability.

Paris

JULIO NUNEZ

"Unresolved Questions"

MAX BELOFF'S ARTICLE, supposedly on multi-cultural education (ENCOUNTER, May) is, as one might expect, written from the point of view of élitist education. Any poorly-paid city school-teacher's ideas would have made far more worthwhile reading.

"Unresolved Questions" fails to recognise the rights of students, parents,

and the local authority to protest when they were outraged by the opinions of Ray Honeyford. It also fails to pose the question: Would the principal of Waltham Forest have commented on racial origin, had certain criminal activities been carried out by white students?

"Peace Studies" at Bradford University is attacked by Max Beloff for its "low intellectual demands." Surely this is an odd and risky statement coming from one who was Principal of University College, Buckingham. This, with the inability to see racism in the British education system, seems to suggest it is not a drop in standards that concerns Max Beloff, but a pining for the decline in traditional values, which keep academic success in the hands of the privileged.

IAN DUCKETT

Hackney College
London

MR DUCKETT has clearly taken to heart the old legal adage: 'When in doubt as to the strength of your case, abuse the plaintiff's attorney.' He would have preferred comments from a teacher in a city school.

He seems unaware of the fact that Mr Ray Honeyford was supported throughout his ordeal by his own trade union, the National Association of Head Teachers. Are they also to be accused of "elitism"? They hold the view—and I share it with all responsible teachers, including Mr Honeyford—that the best service our schools can render children from all groups in our multiracial society is to give them the wherewithal to meet the demands of earning one's living and making one's way in a competitive world.

MAX BELOFF

House of Lords
Westminster

Stove & Popper

D. C. STOVE'S REPLY to Pierre Watter's sound criticism (ENCOUNTER, December 1985) of Stove's article (June 1985) appeared to be equally sound.

"My [Stove's] taking realism for granted cannot possibly be the source of my disagreements with Popper, because Popper (as is well known) is a realist too."

In fact Professor Stove errs in that Popper's self-proclaimed epistemological realism is questionable on at least two different counts (though this is not well known): and this surely is the chief source of Stove's profound disagreements with Popper.

First, regarding the question of the (quantum) *nature* of matter, Popper follows Einstein in embracing realism.

However, regarding the *movement* of matter, as well as regarding both the nature and the propagation of light-relativity theory, Popper again follows Einstein in repudiating the true realism of Copernicus, Galileo, Newton, and Maxwell regarding the reality of the absolute reference frame. Curiously, neither Einstein nor Popper nor anyone else seems to have recognised this little philosophical lapse.

Second, Popper asserts (as is well known) that hypotheses can never be verified experimentally (i.e. proven to be completely, absolutely, and permanently true). They are either refuted or merely temporarily supported. Moreover, however many times a hypothesis survives an experimental test, Popper maintains that the probability of its truth is never increased; and, in fact, it is always zero, because there always remains the possibility that a future experiment will falsify it. But, as a few other critics have shown, the difficulty of achieving a *positive* end (establish the truth, discover reality) by means of a negative method (conjecture and refutation) is logically insurmountable.

Thus, Popper's alleged realism is exposed for what Stove has (by other means) shown it to be: irrational humbug.

T. THEOCHARIS

*Imperial College of
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Popper and "t2"

KARL POPPER advises us (*Unended Quest*, p. 19): "Never let yourself be goaded into taking seriously problems about words and their meanings. What must be taken seriously are questions of fact, and assertions about facts, theories and hypotheses, the problems they solve and the problems they raise."

While I welcome D. C. Stove's attempts at criticism, he seems determined to misunderstand Sir Karl Popper. He now asks what possible justification there can be for proving, empirically, the falsity of statements when "all theories are *a priori* false." This seems an appropriate point to reintroduce Stove to the idea of the attainment of increasing accuracy as the aim of science. Where *t1* is the earlier theory and *t2* the proposed new theory, we can say with Popper that *t2* corresponds better to the facts (and is thus more accurate) if:

- (1) *t2* makes more precise assertions than *t1*, and these assertions stand up to more precise tests.
- (2) *t2* takes account of and explains more facts than *t1*.
- (3) *t2* describes or explains the facts in more detail than *t1*.

Letters

(4) *t2* has passed tests which *t1* has failed to pass.

(5) *t2* has suggested new experimental tests and has passed these tests.

(6) *t2* has unified or connected various previously unrelated problems.

Thus, while our means of measurement do not permit us to be entirely certain of the exact position of our objective, or the precision of our aim, or the exactitude of our attempted location of it, we can rejoice at the increasing accuracy of our theories in describing our universe. This quite modest truth is not self-evident; but we can make use of the best-tested theories we have and that is quite good enough for me, and perhaps for Mr Stove also. I hope that this helps Mr Stove to get himself straight.

TONY HOLLICK

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F. E. Smith

MR EDWARD PEARCE [ENCOUNTER, February] was in error, though no doubt unintentionally, when he asserted that my grandfather F. E. Smith was "corrupt." Not even Smith's bitterest critics ever brought the charge that he sought to enrich himself through politics, or that he ever stole money from anyone. Indeed, throughout his career he was largely uninterested in money; and he died a poor man.

ADRIAN BERRY

*Daily Telegraph
London*

Remembering Dirac

READING Esther and Myer Salaman's "Remembering Paul Dirac" (ENCOUNTER May) brought to mind a memorable encounter I had with the scientist a decade or so ago.

I was attending a conference on energy in Fort Lauderdale and Dirac was one of several Nobel Laureates invited to grace the event by his presence. He was pointed out to me at a large and noisy cocktail reception, a frail elderly man standing all alone and apparently ignored by the other guests. When I suggested to a colleague that we talk with him, he replied "I couldn't—that would be like talking with God."

But, not being a physicist, I suffered no such reservations and launched a conversation with Dirac about G. H. Hardy, his contemporary at Cambridge, whose *Mathematician's Apology* I had just finished reading. Dirac told me that Hardy had a picture of Bradman in his study and asked me if I knew who he

was. When I identified him as a cricket player, Dirac was clearly surprised that a non-Englishman knew anything at all about cricket and proceeded to describe Hardy's fondness for cricket and how he used to bowl on the lawns of Cambridge. He then reminisced about other Cambridge contemporaries, including Wittgenstein, of whom he commented, "Awful fellow. Never stopped talking." Dirac actually became quite effusive, and talked with me for an hour or so.

I ran into Dirac several times during the conference, including in the morning when we would both swim in the ocean; and he was always gracious and friendly. When I met his charming wife, I decided that he was probably one of those men who feel more comfortable in the company of women than men. But I can confirm Mrs Salaman's statement that Mme Dirac complained about him to others. At one point, when Dirac insisted on walking somewhere instead of waiting for the bus, she turned to me, a relative stranger, and said, "My husband is a stubborn old man."

COLLEEN TAYLOR SEN

Chicago

Hue & Cry

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JEFFERSON T. WILSON

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